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THE

MYSTERIES

OF THE

FOREST

A Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS MARY HOUGHTON,

AUTHOR OF THE BORDER CHIEFTAINS, &c.

SECOND EDITION.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.

1822.

249. n. 23.

Printed by J. Gillet, Crown-Court, Fleet-Street.

THE

MYSTERIES

OF

THE FOREST.

CHAPTER I.

"You took me up,
An orphan to the desert world exposed,
And proved another parent."

OTWAY.

THE rays of the setting sun still gleamed on its lofty trees, when the Conte d'Albano, and his attendants, entered a large forest in the vicinity of Teviso, on his way to Sicily, whither he was returning after an absence of some weeks at Milan, on a visit to a friend. The excessive heat had compelled him to rest during the day at a small village, and the shades of night overtook him long before

he had got half through the forest. They quickened their pace, but the dark shadows that fell around rendered the road indistinct, and they soon discovered that they had missed their way, as the grassy tract they were now pursuing bore but slight traces of being trod by man. Alarmed, they hastened to inform their lord of the mistake they had made: who, after some deliberation, determined to go forward, in the hope of finding some hamlet where they might obtain, if not a shelter, at least a direction to the town whither they were going. Spurring their horses, they hastened on, and the Conte soon lost the idea of his immediate situation, while he contemplated the scene before him. The moon shone in an unclouded sky, and stealing in long rays between the trembling boughs, checkered the shadowy ground beneath them.

No sound caught the attentive ear,

save the low murmur of the breeze among the wood tops, and at intervals the plaintive note of the nightingale inspiring a sweet and tender melancholy. From the reverie into which he had fallen, the Conte was suddenly arouzed by his attendants all at once stopping their horses; and looking round to discover the cause, he beheld, strongly illuminated by the moon beams, a figure enveloped in black, gliding between the boles of the trees, a short distance before them.

He started, and calling to his servants, demanded "who it was?" "We do not know, my lord," replied one of them with a look of alarm; "but perhaps it is one of the banditti who are reported to infest this forest."

This supposition was too probable to be altogether rejected, and in some trepidation the Conte inquired of his attendants

"if they were well armed?" They had scarcely answered in the affirmative, when the figure again appeared at the end of the avenue where they were, and suddenly stopping, seemed to await the approach of the travellers.

The Conte had now recovered his usual presence of mind, and reflecting, that to delay the danger that might threaten them, would not be to evade it, he desired one of his domestics to ride up to the stranger, and inquire what he wanted. He obeyed, but ere he had advanced many paces, the object of their doubts himself approached, and demanded of the servants the name of their lord, and to what country he belonged. Paulo hesitated; but at length replied, "that he was the Conte d'Albano, and a Sicilian nobleman." "Tell him, then," exclaimed the stranger, "that I would speak to him for a few moments, on a subject of importance; I trust to his

generosity to grant this request, nor shall he have reason to repent his condescension."

Paulo hastened to communicate the message of the stranger to his lord, who ordered him to approach, and in a tone of affability inquired what he wished to say.

"My lord," returned the stranger, "our conversation will not admit of witnesses—order your domestics to retire to some distance. You hesitate! but fear not, I am unarmed."

"Enough," said the Conte, after a moment's deliberation, "I rely upon your word; but remember, if you deceive me—" and he assumed a threatening aspect.

"If I deceive you, my lord, let that moment be my last." "Follow me, then,"

replied the Conte; and making a signal to his attendants to wait for him where they were, he rode to some distance, and again demanded of the stranger the reason of his proceedings.

"Ere I inform you, my lord," exclaimed the mysterious unknown, in a solemn tone, "you must promise me to swear—" "What?" interrupted the Conte, in some alarm—"that you will protect the helpless object I would commit to your care;" and to the infinite astonishment of his companion, drew from beneath his cloak an infant, wrapped up in a mantle of black velvet, and placed it in the unresisting arms of d'Albano.

"Oh! my lord," he continued, "by all your hopes of happiness here and hereafter, I implore you to befriend this hapless babe. It is noble, it is friendless; and if you refuse to extend your protec-

tion to it, I must abandon it to chance, and most probably to death.—You are, perhaps, a father: let that tender name plead in its behalf."

"I am, indeed," replied the Conte, much affected; "and here I solemnly swear to supply the place of one to this poor deserted, till a superior claim obliges me to relinquish it. Yet tell me, by what name is it distinguished?"

"By that of Valoria, my lord. I dare say no more. May the blessing of heaven follow you, as you fulfil the sacred trust reposed in you. Farewel, and remember your oath."

He said, and rushing from the presence of the Conte, was soon lost in the thickness of the forest.

For some moments after his departure

the Conte remained motionless; when recovered to a sense of his situation, he secured his little charge beneath his cloak, and silently joining his attendants pursued his journey, lost in reflections on the strange adventure that had befallen him.

The road soon conducted them to a small hamlet on the skirts of the forest, and, on alighting at the inn, the Conte called for lights, and retiring to a private apartment, proceeded to examine more minutely the deposit that had been so solemnly committed to his care. On opening the mantle in which it was enveloped, he beheld the fairest cherub that ever graced mortality. The robe of white cambric in which it was habited, declared it to be of more than common rank; and round the neck was suspended a gold Venetian chain, and a locket surmounted with the cyphers A.V. in pearls, and inclosing a lock of hair. While the

Conte was attentively gazing on the sleeping babe, it awoke; and wanting the nourishment that nature called for, began to cry: he rung the bell, and, on the entrance of the landlady, committed it to her care, and after a slight supper, retired to his couch, where he enjoyed, in spite of its hardness, those sweet slumbers that usually attend on virtue.

The following morning the Conte resumed his journey, and at the end of a few days arrived at his own castle, which was situated at a short distance from Messina. On alighting from his horse, he ordered one of his servants to follow him with the infant Valoria to the anti-chamber, and flew himself to the apartment of his lady, impatient to embrace her again after his short absence. She was playing with her infant daughter, and on the entrance of the Conte, whose arrival she was ignorant of, rushed into his

arms. After the first salutations were over, "My beloved Seriphina," said d'Albano, "I have a stranger to introduce to you, for whom I must intreat your kind reception."

"A stranger! my lord?" replied the Contessa, with some surprise; "but whoever it may be, doubt not my readiness to receive and welcome one introduced by my d'Albano."

"Thank you, Seriphina," returned her lord, affectionately kissing her hand; "but before I present to you my protégée, I will relate to you a little history which will, I doubt not, interest you in her favour." He immediately informed the attentive Contessa of all that had befallen him in the forest. She was surprized and affected; but she relied implicitly on the truth and honour of her husband, and readily promised her pro-

tection to his little charge. The Conte now stepped into the anti-chamber, and returned in a few moments with Valoria, whom he placed in the arms of his lady. Her beauty, her helpless state, and the infantile smile that seemed to solicit notice, all appealed powerfully to the sensibility of the Contessa's heart; and, folding the little cherub to her bosom, she vowed to supply to her the place of a mother, and regard her in the same light as her own Eugenia. A tender embrace from her lord, conveyed his approbation of her sentiments, and was the sweetest reward to her heart.

From this moment Valoria shared with the little Eugenia the tender care and affection of her amiable protectors; which were at first bestowed upon her from a sentiment of duty and pity, but soon became the expression of their real tenderness for her, and the just tribute to

that goodness of heart and sweetness of disposition, her increasing years displayed: and when they folded the two lovely children in their parental arms they felt that both were equally dear to their affections; and that if their Eugenia had the tenderest claim from nature, it was amply supplied to Valoria, in the pity her deserted and friendless state had inspired.

Ten summers had glided on, since her first introduction at the castle, when Heaven thought fit to deprive her of the dear and generous protector to whom she was, most probably, indebted for her preservation from the fate that had threatened her infancy.

A violent infectious fever broke out in the village, and carried off numbers of its inhabitants. Every precaution was used at the castle to prevent the contagion,

but in vain. Some of the domestics sickened, and the fatal disorder was at length communicated to the Conte. Heedless of infection, and of his ardent intreaties that she would not expose herself to danger, his almost distracted wife watched the progress of his disease. The crisis was fatal; and on the eighth day d'Albano expired in her arms, imploring the blessing of heaven on his Seriphina; and conjuring her, by their past love, to overcome her grief for his loss, and to live for the sake of their Eugenia, and the orphan Valoria, the mystery of whose fate might, at some future period, be unravelled to her satisfaction.

The heart of sensibility may conceive the grief and despair of the distracted Contessa, at this cruel event. D'Albano had been the beloved of her soul, and for twelve years she had enjoyed with him

the most perfect conjugal happiness that ever fell to the lot of woman. Deprived of him, the world seemed a desert waste, and existence itself a burthen almost beyond supporting.

From this lethargy of grief she was arouzed by the fear of new calamities. The two children were seized with the disorder that had already proved so fatal to her happiness, and the agonies she suffered at the idea of their being torn from her, convinced the Contessa, that the wretchedness she felt for her husband's death might yet be dreadfully increased. Unceasing were her prayers to heaven to restore her darlings. Her ardent petitions reached the throne of mercy; the children recovered; and, grateful for the blessings spared her, she bowed in meek submission to the decree that had taken away her lord.

Time with his balmy hand assuaged the violence of her sorrow, and the remembrance of her lost d'Albano was accompanied only with a tender and melancholy regret, that continued to mark her manners during the remainder of her life. All her hopes of earthly happiness were now centered in her children, and the care of their education employed almost the whole of her time. Highly accomplished, elegant in manners, and adorned with every virtue, the amiable Contessa was fully equal to the important task, which was amply rewarded by the improvement of her young pupils; and she had the satisfaction to see them grow up like plants, that every day put forth fresh blossoms to recompense the care of those who cultivate them. Both were equally lovely in person and in mind, yet the character of each was marked with a striking difference, that gave a separate interest to both.

Valoria's figure was such as might have distinguished a Grecian nymph; and from her lovely countenance, a Raphael might have borrowed his finished contour; and a Reubens, his delicate, yet glowing colours. The soul of sensibility beamed in her dark and beautiful eyes, modulated the tones of her melodious voice, and softened every look and feature. Her manners were gentle and elegant as the mind that animated them; and she timidly shrunk from the eye of observation, as the modest violet beneath the shady thicket. Her affections were ardent, and her gratitude, for the benefits she owed to the noble Albano and his family, unbounded. The memory of the former she cherished with a religious veneration; and the Contessa and Eugenia, always experienced from her the love and duty due to a mother and a sister.

The figure of her young friend was no less charming than Valoria's; her complexion, though not so fair, was exceedingly lovely, and adorned with an enchanting bloom. The most speaking vivacity sparkled in her fine black eyes, and played round a mouth that might have graced the countenance of a Hebe. The same gaiety animated her manners, and diffused a charm over every object around her; her temper was excellent, and her heart the seat of every feminine virtue.

Such were our two heroines; nor is it to be wondered that the Contessa exulted in the perfections of beings so dear to her. Yet often, as she remarked the different traits of their dispositions, did she behold with pain, the keen sensibility of the gentle Valoria, and tremble for her future happiness. Unceasingly did she endeavour, by her wise and affecting

lessons, to strengthen her fortitude, and teach her to acquire that command of feeling, that could alone enable her to encounter the trials of life with patience and dignity.

To every precept of her adored benefactress, Valoria paid the most implicit reverence; and it was the constant study of her life, to show by her conduct, they were deeply impressed on her heart. Alternately divided between their studies and amusements, the hours of childhood flew on wings of down, and they imperceptibly arrived at that period when Eugenia had entered her seventeenth, and Valoria her sixteenth year, with persons adorned with every natural grace, and minds enriched by every accomplishment that the most polished education could bestow.

CHAPTER II.

"Oh Hero! what a hero hadst thou been,
If half thy outward graces had been plac'd
About the thoughts and counsels of thy heart."
SHAKSPEARE.

A SHORT time after the period before alluded to, in a beautiful evening, the two young friends went out to enjoy a walk in the park, after the intense heat of a sultry day in the middle of July. A refreshing shower had revived the drooping flowers, and deepened the dark foliage of the orange groves. The birds, grateful for the refreshing coolness, resumed their melodious notes, and every breeze wafted the most delicious fragrance on the ravished senses. Tempted by the beauty of the evening, they strayed,

regardless of the length of their walk, till finding themselves fatigued, they ascended an eminence, and seating themselves on a rustic bench, beneath the spreading shade of a large plane tree, gazed with delight on the lovely prospect before them.

Directly beneath their feet was the boundary of the Contessa's domains, and under the park paling, the high road that led to the village. The latter, thickly embosomed in trees, and crowned with the spires of its church, appeared at a small distance. Beyond extended a prospect adorned with all the features peculiar to Italian scenery; and the city of Messina, with the blue waters of its bay, were indistinctly seen in the distant perspective, almost overspread by the grey mist of twilight.

While thus occupied, their attention was suddenly called off from the prospect

before them by the appearance of a gentleman in the road, whose horse, from the rapidity of his motion, appeared to have run away with him. The efforts of the stranger to stop the unruly animal, were useless; and at length, disengaging himself from his rider, (who was flung to some distance,) he gallopped furiously off towards the village.

Valoria and her friend had beheld this scene in almost breathless agitation, and continued to gaze in hope of seeing the stranger arise from the ground. But their expectations were disappointed: he remained immovable on the spot where he had fallen; and, convinced that he must have sustained some considerable injury, they hastened almost involuntarily to the place, and beheld the object of their anxiety extended, apparently lifeless on the ground, and bathed in the blood that flowed from a wound in his temple,

Valoria bound her handkerchief round his head, while Eugenia held her salts to his nose, and chaffed his hands and temples. Their endeavours, however, to restore him to animation were without effect; and alarmed by his long insensibility, as well as uneasy at the terror the Contessa would feel at their long absence, (for the night began to approach,) Eugenia resolved to go to the castle, to inform her mother of what had so long detained them, and beg of her to send some assistance to the wounded stranger.

With this determination she hastened back to the house with such rapidity that her feet scarcely touched the ground; and Valoria, seating herself on a grassy bank by the road side, supported the head of the unfortunate cavalier on her lap, and anxiously watched his return to life. During this interval she had leisure to examine his person more attentively. His

dress announced him to be of superior rank; and his fine figure, and handsome features, were rendered more interesting by the lifeless appearance of the one, and the deadly paleness of the other.

A short time after Eugenia's departure, he began to show signs of returning sense, and, unclosing a pair of very fine eyes, raised them to Valoria's face, and exclaimed in a faint tone, "Do I dream? Or is it some celestial spirit that I behold?'

"Compose yourself, signor," replied Valoria, timidly; "I am very glad to see you revived; and hope the assistance I have sent for, will soon enable you to be removed from this place. The stranger pressed her hand, in token of acknowledgment, and remained silent. The sound of footsteps now drew Valoria's attention to the road, and she beheld several of the

Contessa's servants approaching them, to whom she resigned the care of the stranger, and having placed him on a kind of litter, they slowly conveyed him to the castle, and Valoria hastened forward to announce their coming.

On their arrival, the cavalier, who had again relapsed into insensibility, was conveyed into a parlour, and a surgeon sent for immediately. The Contessa, who had followed him, approached the sofa on which he was laid, and joined, with much anxiety, in the exertions of her attendants to revive him.

They were at length successful; but he was so much exhausted as to be unable to speak. On the arrival of the surgeon he was conveyed up stairs, and after his wound had been examined, his amiable hostess heard him declare, with much satisfaction, that it was not mortal, but

that he must be kept very quiet, as he was apprehensive of fever. Satisfied, in some measure, with this assurance, the Contessa was retiring with her daughter, when she was told that a man on horseback had just arrived at the castle, and humbly requested to see her. He was immediately admitted into her presence; and from him the Contessa learnt that he was servant to the Signor Montaldi, the young gentleman who was her guest. That his lord was going from Palermo to his estate in Calabria; and that he had been left behind at the next post town, for letters, when he had met the unfortunate accident, that had so nearly proved fatal.

On arriving at the village he had been informed of this occurrence, as well as that Signor Montaldi had been carried to the castle of the benevolent Contessa d'Albano, and concluded by apologizing

for his intrusion, which he intreated her ladyship to impute to his anxiety to hear his master's situation.

The Countess interrupted him by saying, that no apology was necessary for such a proof of his attachment; and desired him to continue in her house till Signor Montaldi was sufficiently recovered to leave it. She then dismissed him to take some refreshment; and soon after the family retired to repose.

For some days the young Cavalier remained in a very precarious state; in which time he experienced the most unremitted attention from every one at the castle; and to this, assisted by youth and a good constitution, might principally be attributed his restoration to health.

At the end of a few days he was able to sit up in a dressing room adjoining his

apartment; and the Contessa, accompanied by her daughter and Valoria, went to pay him a visit of congratulation on his recovery. He received them with an easy gracefulness, that convinced them of his perfect acquaintance with all the forms of polished society; and was profuse in his acknowledgments to his amiable hostess for her goodness; but this was a subject painful to the benevolent Contessa; and, perceiving it was so, Montaldi delicately dropped it, and turned the conversation. They talked for some time on indifferent subjects, in all of which he displayed a great knowledge of the world, joined to much entertainment; and when, fearful of fatiguing the invalid, they retired from the chamber, they were highly prepossessed in favour of their guest.

Montaldi recovered slowly, and the tedious hours of convalescence were en-

lightened by the attentions of the amiable inmates of the castle. He was soon able to be removed to a small apartment on the ground floor, and both Valoria and Eugenia exerted themselves to amuse him; and the fascinating gaiety of the young d'Albano, ever banished ennui from their party, if it could have been possible to have experienced it in such society.

Montaldi seemed impressed with equal gratitude to his fair entertainers; yet when alone with her, his ardent and impassioned gaze frequently surprized and disconcerted the timid Valoria, and she shrunk from his bold glance with an emotion nearly approaching to disgust. In the presence of the Contessa, and even of Eugenia, his manners were marked with a striking difference, and though Valoria was too artless to suspect that there could be any thing concealed

under this disguise, yet the natural impulse of her delicate mind taught her to disapprove of it, and she always avoided being alone with Montaldi.

We shall here pause for a short time, in order to present to our readers some accout of Montaldi, prior to this period.

This young man was descended from a collateral branch of a noble Sicilian family, and being an only child, was the idol of his doating parents, whose mistaken and unbounded indulgence encouraged instead of correcting his naturally strong passions; and from a long acquired habit of yielding implicitly to their violent sway, he became at length unable to control them.

He lost his parents at an early age, and was left the unrestrained master of a large fortune; and, of himself, at an age when

youth is too entirely influenced by the example of those with whom it associates. Released from the restraint imposed upon him by the authority of his guardians, Montaldi delivered himself up to every alluring temptation—gave an uncontrouled indulgence to every vicious inclination, and his Palazzo was the scene of lawless pleasure, riot, and licentiousness. Yet, while distinguished among the profligate partakers of his vices and amusements as a complete and accomplished libertine, Montaldi could assume a very different character when his pursuits and purposes required it; and so perfect was he in the art of deception, which formed the most prominent feature in his disposition, that he had obtained the friendship and esteem of many persons of the highest character and respectability at Palermo, whom he had imposed on by his false virtues, and who regarded him favourably, from the appearance of

those good qualities he never, in reality, possessed.

Elegant in manners, handsome in person, and fascinating in conversation, Montaldi was the envy of one sex—the idol of the other—and many were the fair Sicilians who would have thought themselves honoured by his offered hand; but Montaldi wished not to marry; and while he possessed the means of gratifying his roving inclinations, he considered wedlock as a galling chain never to be assumed till there was no longer a possibility of avoiding it.

The dissipated life he led, and a violent passion for gaming, soon impaired his fortune, and he saw no other plan of extricating himself from his difficulties, except by selling an estate he possessed in Calabria. He determined, therefore, to visit it, in order to form an estimate of

its value; and it was on his journey hither that he met with the accident which first introduced him to the acquaintance of the Contessa d'Albano and her family.

From the moment he first beheld her, Valoria's exquisite beauty had made a deep impression on Montaldi's fancy. On a further intimacy, the sweetness of her manners, her talents, and sensibility, confirmed the charm, and he soon conceived for her the most violent passion he had ever yet felt.

His pride and interest, however, were equally against an union with an unknown dependent orphan; and as he was highly confident in his own attractions, he did not despair of obtaining her on less honourable terms. Yet so touching, so unaffected, was the pure virtue of Valoria, that even the libertine Mon-

taldi shrunk from the idea of insulting her by a declaration of illicit passion; and he was almost inclined to abandon his project, when a circumstance occurred that gave a new date to his hopes and prospects.

A strange and striking alteration suddenly took place in the manners of Eugenia; her gaiety disappeared, the colour forsook her cheek, and absent and spiritless, she shunned society—but more particularly that of Montaldi. When accidentally alone with him, her divided attention and embarrassment evidently evinced her uneasiness. If he addressed her, she blushed and trembled. The slightest mark of regard called up the most animated expression of pleasure into her charming face. When he addressed Valoria, as he sometimes did, with an air of passion, her changing colour and starting tears betrayed the

emotions of her soul. The wily Montaldi was not slow in perceiving this conduct of Eugenia, and instantly attributed it to the true cause.

Montaldi's figure, his accomplishments, and fascinating manners, had inspired her young and artless bosom with a sensation till then unknown. Shuddering at the discovery of her own feelings, and despairing of a return of affection, she resolved to bury the secret of her love in her own heart, and endeavour to conquer her predilection for Montaldi.

Doomed continually to behold the object of her tenderness, to listen to his insinuating conversation, and to receive numberless little galantries from him, her efforts to tear his image from her heart was ineffectual, and her health and spirits daily gave way beneath the con-

flict of her mind. In the mean time, Montaldi reflected deeply on the discovery he had made of her sentiments. Eugenia was an heiress, and on the death of the Contessa, would be possessed of an immense property, a marriage with her would at once free him from all his embarrassments, and enable him to continue in that career of gaiety and extravagance he had hitherto pursued. It was true, he loved Valoria, but an union with her was not to be thought of, and his designs upon her would, he fancied, be rather forwarded than impeded by marrying her friend, as his opportunities of seeing and conversing with her would be more frequent and unrestrained, and he entertained no doubt but time and perseverance, added to his natural attractions, would soon gain her for his own.

His resolution once formed, his next

step was to pursue the plan he had adopted; and the following evening, when Eugenia retired, as usual, to her solitary walk in the garden, he took the opportunity of Valoria's leaving the room to go in search of her, determined to reveal at once his hopes and wishes. He found her reclined in an arbour, her head resting upon her hand, and tears stealing slowly from her eyes. At the sight of Montaldi she started, and would have fled, but he gently detained her; and falling at her feet, avowed his affection for her in the most impassioned terms, and implored her not to doom him to despair and death.

The emotions of Eugenia at this unexpected declaration were too violent to be disguised; trembling and blushing, she faintly stammered something about her mother, and her consent. "I understand you, charming Eugenia," exclaimed

the subtle Montaldi; "but if I dared to flatter myself with possessing your favour, I am presumptuous enough to hope for her compliance; for the Contessa d'Albano will not, cannot, refuse the prayers of her adored daughter; say but you consent, and this moment may decide my fate." Overcome by the emotions of her soul, Eugenia was unable to refuse, and, hastening to the castle, they threw themselves at the Contessa's feet, avowed their mutual love, and implored her to bless their union. Surprize for some moments kept the Contessa silent, but it was not the silence of disapprobation, she highly admired the pleasing manners and apparent virtues of young Montaldi, and the character she had heard of him from her friends at Palermo, had secretly prompted a wish that he might become attached to her daughter. Her pleasure, therefore, at this declaration was unfeigned, and taking the hand

of Eugenia she placed it in that of Montaldi, exclaiming at the same time, "Take her, my amiable young friend; and may the blessing of heaven descend upon you both; for, believe me, there exists not the man to whom I would more willingly consign the best treasure I possess."

"It shall be the study of my life, madam," replied Montaldi, "to deserve the high opinion you honour me with," at the same time carrying the hand of Eugenia to his lips: at that moment Valoria entered the room, and beholding Eugenia and Montaldi at the Contessa's feet, she stood motionless with surprize. The latter called her to her, and in a few words explained the meaning of the scene before her. With a look of the tenderest affection, Valoria embraced and congratulated her friend:—"And have I no share in your good wishes, Signora Valo-

ria?" exclaimed Montaldi, in a tone of reproach.

"Oh yes, surely," she replied, blushing, and extending her hand to him, "I cannot wish you greater happiness than the possession of my Eugenia.——" Montaldi took her offered hand, and pressed it to his lips. The soft touch seemed to electrify his frame; he dropped her hand, and muttering an apology, hastily quitted the room, to indulge his reflections, and form new plans for the future.

Every preparation was now made in the most splendid style, for the nuptials of the Signor Montaldi with the fair and wealthy lady of the castle; and a day not very distant was fixed on by the Contessa for their celebration. The nearer the time approached that was to unite his destiny to Eugenia, the more

did Montaldi's soul revolt from the despicable part he was acting; but he was now gone too far to recede, and he endeavoured to stifle the upbraidings of his conscience, by anticipating the time when the possession of Valoria would amply reward his present self-denial.

The day so anxiously expected, at length arrived; the solemn ceremony was performed in the castle chapel, in presence only of the Contessa and Valoria; and, in an evil hour, the innocent and lovely Eugenia became the wife of the base and treacherous Montaldi.

CHAPTER III.

"Relentless Death, that, steel'd to human woe,
With murd'rous hands deals havoc on mankind,
Why cruel strike this deprecated blow."

SHAW.

A FEW days after their marriage Montaldi and his beautiful bride set off to the house of the latter in Palermo. The parting between Eugenia and her beloved friends at the castle, was truly affecting; alternately she embraced her mother and Valoria, while the former, in the most solemn terms, committed her darling to Montaldi's care; assuring him, that the blessing of heaven would descend upon him as he discharged the sacred trust reposed in him: to which he replied, by the most repeated assurances, that he lived but for her happiness; then gently disengag-

ing his wife from the arms of the Contessa he led her, drowned in tears, to the carriage; which soon bore them far from the walls of d'Albano.

The loss of the friend and companion of her childhood, was the first real sorrow Valeria had experienced: fearful, however, of adding to the Contessa's grief, she endeavoured to overcome her feelings, and, by every tender and endearing attention sought to lure her back to cheerfulness; and her attempts were not unsuccessful. Devoted entirely to her benefactress, and now her only companion, she became more dear to her than ever.

Several months glided on, and nothing occurred to disturb the calm seclusion in which they lived. Frequent letters arrived from Eugenia, which drew animated pictures of the gay scenes in which she moved, though they dwelt but slightly

on her own individual happiness. The Contessa remarked it, and was uneasy; yet so agonizing to her was the mere idea that her child was disappointed in her hopes of felicity, that she instantly dismissed the thought, and flattered herself the omission was owing to accident. She at length received a letter from her with the information that, being in a situation that rendered her unable to support the constant round of dissipation in which she was engaged, it was Montaldi's intention to retire for a short time to their estate in Calabria, and that they would pass a few days with her, in their way hither.

The idea of beholding their beloved Eugenia was a source of exquisite pleasure to the Contessa and Valoria. To the latter, indeed, it was not unmixed with pain; for, though imperceptible to all but herself, her inward feelings whispered to

her it was a felicity she should not long enjoy.

The wished for day arrived, and Eugenia and her husband once more entered the abode of her ancestors. The joy with which her mother embraced her was damped by the alteration that had taken place in her; she was pale and thin, and no longer possessed that fascinating gaiety that once rendered her so charming; yet she endeavoured to assume a factitious cheerfulness, and in answer to the Contessa's eager inquiries, assured her she was well and happy, and the alteration she remarked, was merely owing to her having exerted herself too much, and that a few months retirement would restore her.

The Contessa sighed, and was silent; but a few days soon convinced her, that a much deeper cause existed for her daughter's evident depression and indisposi-

tion; but delicacy prevented her from making any remark to Eugenia, and she contented herself with carefully observing the conduct of Montaldi to his wife. It was ever polite, tender, and attentive, and seemed to flow instinctively from the heart.

More at a loss than ever to account for the unhappiness of Eugenia, she at length resolved to question her on the subject; but she assured her so repeatedly that she was perfectly happy, and that her apparent sadness was only the effect of a nervous affection, that the Contessa ceased to urge her on the subject, and only implored her, as she valued those who loved her, to be careful of her health, and consent to have some advice.

After staying a fortnight with her mother, Montaldi and his wife set off to Calabria. A sad presentiment oppressed the

Contessa's mind, that she should behold her child no more; and when the carriage drove away that contained her, she sunk, drowned in tears, into the arms of Valoria.

From the day Signora Montaldi departed, her mother's health gradually declined, and it soon became visible to the eyes of the anxious Valoria, who earnestly entreated her to follow the counsel she had herself given to Eugenia, and suffer her to send to Messina for a physician. Unwilling to excite the fears of her beloved protégée, the Contessa at the first refused, but her increasing ill health, and her wish to preserve her life for the sake of her children, overcame her reluctance, and she accordingly yielded to her request.

Signor Corvino on his arrival declared the Contessa's disorder to be a gradual decline, and that her only chance of re-

covery was an immediate change of air. The agony of Valoria at this intelligence is not to be described; her imagination already predicted the loss of this more than mother, and at this moment felt she was dearer to her soul than ever.

The Contessa heard the sentence of her physician with perfect calmness; but willing to do every thing that depended on herself to restore her health, or at least to satisfy the anxiety of her family, she ordered Signor Corvino to hire her a house any where he might think most proper.

A small villa, near the bay of Naples, was accordingly procured; and, after writing to her daughter, who she informed, in the tenderest manner, that her health required a change of air, the Contessa, accompanied by the anxious Valoria and a few of her domestics, set out to her new residence.

The sea breezes seemed to renovate anew the languid frame of the Contessa. Valoria's hopes revived, and she eagerly communicated to Eugenia the sentiment of joy diffused through her own breast. The latter, anxious and unhappy, was only prevented joining her mother by the commands of Montaldi, and the advice of her physician, who declared so long a journey, in her present situation, might be attended with the worst consequences.

Day after day passed, and the Contessa seemed to get better. Fallacious, however, were the fond hopes this apparent amendment had inspired; her own feelings told her there was no cure for the malady that consumed her. The pure breeze that played o'er her wasted cheek could no longer call back the faint hue of health, and her debility and languor every day increased. Valoria remarked it, and her heart died within her; yet still she struggled against the terrible conviction, and was only

arouzed from the sweet delirium by the Contessa informing her she meant to return home.

Valoria expostulated, and endeavoured to persuade her to stay a little longer: "for sure I am," she exclaimed, "the air will soon perfectly restore you."

The Contessa replied gently. "The benefit, my child, is too trifling to justify a longer trial. D'Albano agrees with me as well; and if it is the will of God, I would willingly breathe my last in the dear spot where my sweetest hours have been spent." Valoria, unable to answer, retired from her presence to conceal her tears; and, with an almost breaking heart, gave orders for their departure; after first informing Eugenia of the sad change that had taken place in their prospects.

In the evening as she sat with the Con-

tessa in the viranda, before the windows of the saloon, she beheld a gentleman on horseback, coming towards the house. A second glance assured her it was Montaldi, and, in some alarm, she informed the Contessa: the latter started from the sofa on which she was laid, and in a tone of emotion exclaimed, "My God, what brings him here; if any thing has befallen my child—" the entrance of Montaldi interrupted her, and in an almost inarticulate voice she inquired for Eugenia. Montaldi informed her she was as well as they could expect, having become, a few weeks before the mother of a son. "An indispensable affair obliged me to come to Naples," added he, "and I have taken this opportunity to enquire personally, my dear madam, after your health and Signora Valoria's."

The Contessa felt hurt that Montaldi should quit his wife at such a time, but

she concealed her chagrin, and embraced, and congratulated him on the birth of his son. Valoria too made her compliments to him; and, in the certainty that her friend was safe, seemed to lose some of her apprehensions for her mother.

The Contessa proceeded to inform Montaldi of her intended return to Albano; and it was at last agreed, as he would only remain a week at Naples, to defer her departure till his return; when he promised to escort them there in his way home.

The following morning Montaldi set out, after being nearly an hour alone with the Contessa, who spoke to him without reserve of her approaching death; and gave him directions how to perform her wishes after her decease, to all of which he promised the most explicit attention; while he inwardly exulted in the prospect

of soon becoming master of that fortune which had been his sole inducement to marry Eugenia.

The decline of the Contessa became now every day more rapid, and so great was her debility, that she passed the greatest part of her time in a recumbent posture. Signor Corvino, who constantly visited her, saw, with unfeigned sorrow, that all was over, and in the gentlest manner endeavoured to prepare Valoria for an inevitable event; yet still her heart clung tenaciously to the hope that had hitherto sustained it; fondly trusting that though the vicinity of Naples had failed, a return to d'Albano would realize all her anxious desires.

The day preceding that in which Montaldi was expected to return, the Contessa appeared considerably better; and in the evening desired Valoria to support her

into a balcony that extended before the windows of her bed room. She obeyed; and the Contessa being seated, Valoria knelt beside her, and with eager looks followed the eyes of her beloved friend, as they wandered over the scene before her.

The sun was setting, and its sinking rays crimsoned the waters of the bay, and gilt the white sails that skimmed over its bosom. The lowing of the cattle, the warbling of the birds, and the blithe song of the peasant as he was returning from his labour, the reviving breeze perfumed by a thousand sweets, every object, every sound was calculated to awaken delicious sensations, even in the bosom of sickness and sorrow. An expression almost celestial lightened up the Contessa d'Albano's countenance, she folded her hands together, and, in a low voice, exclaimed, "My God, I thank thee, for once more permitting me to behold this scene."

She paused; Valoria pressed her hand, and replied in a tender tone; "My dearest mother, do not talk so, you will yet see many, many evenings like this."

The Contessa shook her head incredulously, and was silent. The gloom of twilight began to overspread every object; she arose, and, taking Valoria's arm, returned to her apartment.

The family retired to bed early, and our heroine had fallen asleep, when she was aroused by a loud knocking at her door; she started up, and hastily demanded who was there. "For the love of God, Signora," replied Floretta, the Contessa's woman, "get up, my lady, I fear, is dying." Valoria heard no more, she sprang from the bed, and flinging a few cloaths over her, rushed into the Contessa's chamber, where she beheld her worst fears verified.

Her benefactress, seated in an elbow chair, was supported by pillows, and appeared just recovered from a fainting fit; her eyes were closed, and Floretta, drowned in tears, was bathing her temples. Unable to speak, Valoria staggered across the room, and falling on her knees, by her side, seized the Contessa's hands, and pressed them to her heart, with a motion so agonizing as at once recalled her senses, and unclosing her eyes, she feebly cried: "My Valoria, my child what brings you here?" "Oh my mother, my dearest mother," replied Valoria, in a flood of tears, "do I behold you thus?"

"Be calm, my sweet girl," said the Contessa, tenderly; believe me it is nothing more than usual; I shall soon be better."

"How long has your lady been so ill Floretta?" cried Valoria.—"Not very

long, Signora," she replied; "when you quitted her, my lady went into her oratory, where she remained more than an hour; she then rung the bell for me, and while I was undressing her she all on a sudden complained of a giddiness in her head, and——" she was interupted by a sigh from the Contessa, who fell back in her chair, apparently lifeless. Valoria shrieked, and started up exclaiming, in a frantic tone, "Oh God, she is dead!"

"I hope not," replied Floretta. "Pray, dear Signora, do not cry so, it is only a fainting fit, she will soon recover."

"Where, where is Signor Corvino?" inquired Valoria; "Oh! that he was here."

"I have sent to Naples for him an hour ago, Signora; he cannot be long before he arrives."

The Contessa now began to show some signs of life, when the door opened, and the physician entered. He appeared less surprized than shocked at the state in which he found her; and in reply to the eager inquiries of Valoria, he only shook his head, with a mournful air. After feeling her pulse, he ordered that she should be immediately put to bed, while he retired to prepare a cordial medicine for her. He was obeyed, and after taking the draught, the Contessa expressed a wish to be alone. Valoria intreated permission to remain with her, but her benefactress insisted on her trying to repose for a few hours; and with a desponding heart our heroine retired to her chamber.

To sleep, however, was impossible in the present state of her mind. The looks of the physician told her there was nothing to hope, and, drowned in tears, she sunk

upon her knees and implored Heaven to ward off the dreadful blow that threatened her.

She was aroused from this pious employment by a tap at the door; and, springing from the floor, she demanded, in terror, what was the matter.—"Don't be frightened, Signora," replied Floretta, for it was her, "I came to tell you that father Francisco, who has been with my lady ever since you left her, is gone, and she is now in a sweet sleep."

"Thank God," exclaimed Valoria, with energy, and opening the door, she glided with noiseless steps to the Contessa's chamber, and placed herself by her pillow. She found her in a profound, but not a tranquil, slumber. She frequently started and spoke, but in tones so low and indistinct, that Valoria could not distinguish their meaning.

It was past midnight, all was perfectly still around her; and leaning her head against the side of the bed, she fell into a kind of lethargic doze, from which she was awakened by the clock in deep tones striking the hour of three. She raised herself, and anxiously surveyed the Contessa, who was still sleeping. A lamp burnt by the bedside, and Valoria, putting back the curtain to regard her more attentively, its glare fell directly on her face, on which the hand of death was imprinted in ghastly characters.

Valoria clasped her hands in an agony of grief, and hiding her face in the pillow, wetted it with her tears. Her heavy sobs awoke the Contessa, who, on perceiving her, inquired, in faint yet tender accents, why she was not in bed?

"Oh! my mother," she replied, "do you think I could leave you?"

"My child," said the Contessa, "I thank you for your tenderness, but you must not injure yourself: listen to me," she continued, "attentively, for I have much to say. I cannot deceive you, I am dying——"

"Oh! talk not of dying, my mother," exclaimed Valoria, or what will become of your poor orphan?"

"Listen to me calmly, my sweet Valoria," replied the Contessa, "and promise me to obey my last injunction."

Valoria fell on her knees, and, in a stifled voice, vowed to fulfil her every wish.

"Enough, my dear girl," said the Contessa, "I am satisfied. Convey my last embrace to my poor Eugenia; tell her that dying I blessed her, and offered my

most fervent prayers for her happiness: embrace Montaldi for me, and tell him, as my last injunction, to love and cherish his wife.

"Do not weep, my sweetest love; I am going where sorrow never dwells; a few short years, my Valoria, and we shall meet, never to be parted more; never forget the instructions I have given you. Be virtuous, and you may then rely with confidence on the protection of an Almighty Father, who will never desert those who trust in him; exert your fortitude, my child, in those trials he may think fit to bring upon you: let no temptation to pleasure, no fear of pain, ever make you forget your duty; and, above all, carefully regulate the sensibility of your heart, on which depends, in a great measure, the misery or happiness of your life."

She paused, exhausted with speaking.

over Valoria's senses; but she too soon awoke to all the bitterness of grief, and leaning her head on the side of the sofa, she wept almost to agony. The good father, who hoped a free indulgence of her tears would relieve her full heart, encouraged them to flow; and well convinced it was useless to combat the first ebullition of sorrow, he continued silently holding her hand till she became, in some degree, calmer, when, in the gentlest accents, he endeavoured to console her. His was not the language of common condolence; his heart felt sincerely the cruel blow *hers* had *received;* and his motives of consolation were drawn from the most sublime and exalted piety.

Valoria listened to him with the most lively attention; and when he ceased speaking, she implored him to suffer her to behold her lost friend once more: "Not now, my child," replied the good father, you must consent to go imme-

diately to bed, and take a medicine that I will procure for you." Valoria, exhausted both in mind and body, made no resistance, and was attended by Floretta to her apartment, where, having swallowed the prescribed draught, she soon fell into a deep and heavy slumber.

Valoria awoke in the morning pale, languid, and unrefreshed. Her anguish had lost none of its acuteness, but her long sleep had revived her harassed spirits, and she felt, though not less wretched, yet less agonized, than she had done the night before. She arose, and dressing herself, went softly to the Contessa's chamber.

It was deserted: one of the curtains was undrawn to admit the light, and Valoria advanced, with anguish and faultering step, to the bed, and supporting herself by one of the pillars, gazed earnestly on the countenance of her departed friend. It

was ghastly, yet placid; and the calm and sweet expression diffused over it, seemed to indicate the happiness of the spirit by which it was so lately animated. Valoria stooped and kissed her pale lips. The cold touch chilled her heart, and at once recalled her fleeting faculties. She burst into tears, and falling on her knees, poured forth all the anguish of her soul.

She was aroused from this indulgence of fruitless grief by a gentle voice repeating her name; she turned, and beheld father Francisco.

"My dear child," said he, "it gives me infinite pain to see you thus abandon yourself to an immoderate sorrow; your lamentations cannot recal the dear friend you have lost; and why should you wish it? She is gone to receive the recompense of her virtues; and by following her example you will again be united to her;

bow then humbly to the dispensations of the Almighty, and show your affection to your departed benefactress, by a performance of her injunctions. Signora Montaldi must look up to you for consolation; think how acute her sorrow will be who knows not yet her loss; and let that idea make you exert your fortitude for her sake."

"I will, father," replied Valoria, in a voice broken by sobs; "Yes, beloved friend, thy poor orphan will not disgrace the lesson of resignation you have inculcated. Merciful God!" she continued, raising her beautiful eyes and hands to heaven, "teach me submission to thy will, and forgive my murmurs at what thy wisdom has ordained." She ceased, and rising from her knees, gave her hand to the friar, who led her from the room.

As they proceeded to her own, he in-

formed her that Montaldi was hourly expected, and that as soon as he had written to his lady, he should himself set off with the letter to Calabria.

Towards the close of the day, as Valoria was sitting in the little dressing room, adjoining her bed-chamber, a servant announced Montaldi, who immediately entered. She arose to welcome him, but her feelings overcame her; and, sinking into a chair, she burst into tears. Montaldi seated himself by her, and taking her hand spoke to her in the most tender and soothing language.

The voice of affection is ever responded to by the afflicted heart; and though Valoria was silent her eyes were eloquent of the grateful feelings of her's. After a few moments she mentioned Eugenia, and learnt that father Francisco had just departed for Sicily with the infor-

mation of the Contessa d'Albano's death.

During a long conversation Montaldi endeavoured, by the most delicate attentions, to console the afflicted Valoria. In regard to her own situation he conjured her to be perfectly easy, for that she might place as unlimited confidence in his friendship and protection as in Eugenia; and it would be his constant endeavour that she might never suffer from the loss she had experienced.

Valoria replied to these professions in suitable terms, and Montaldi soon after retired for the night.

At the end of three days Eugenia and the good father Francisco arrived. The meeting between the two orphaned friends was too affecting to admit of description. The sight of each other renewed the sense

of their mutual loss in all its agony, and their feelings were neither to be controled by the voice of reason or religion. As soon as the first emotions were a little abated, Eugenia desired to be conducted to the chamber of her departed mother.

Fearful of increasing the agitation of her mind, Francisco at first opposed her intention, but she insisted so forcibly that he soon ceased to oppose her, and taking her hand, immediately led her hither. On reaching the room Eugenia desired to be left alone, and the monk, with a friendly benediction, reluctantly departed.

After remaining nearly an hour Eugenia returned composed, though deeply dejected; and notwithstanding her eyes every moment filled with tears, yet she endeavoured to suppress them, and assume an air of serenity in the presence of her husband and Valoria. The latter beheld

with extreme emotion, the efforts of her friend to control her feelings, and resolved to imitate for the future that fortitude she so much admired.

The following day the remains of the Contessa d'Albano, attended by her mourning daughters, were conveyed to Sicily; and after laying in state at the castle, were interred in the adjacent monastery with all the pomp due to her rank, and followed to the grave by all her vassals and domestics, who deeply lamented the loss of their benefactress.

Every search after the Contessa's will proved ineffectual, and Valoria now found herself solely dependant on Eugenia, or, more properly speaking, on Montaldi, since the loss of her mother's will had deprived his wife of the power of providing for her lovely adopted sister, without his participation and consent.

To her earnest intreaties, that he would settle on Valoria a portion adequate to her expectations, and the manner in which she had been brought up, Montaldi replied by an assurance that he would take the first opportunity of doing so; he, however, carefully evaded any renewal of the subject, and conscious that her representations had no power to change his resolves, Eugenia was compelled to leave him to his own generosity, on which indeed she had no great dependence.

It was Montaldi in reality who had deprived the orphan, Valoria, of the affluent fortune left her by her benefactress. On the day he departed for Naples, after his visit at her villa, the Contessa delivered her will to him, which she had made a short time before, and in which he was named, with Eugenia, joint guardian to Valoria, and a large bequest settled on Signora Montaldi, independent of her

husband; Montaldi had then no idea of betraying the trust reposed in him: however, he felt himself offended at the last clause in it, and it was not till after the Contessa's death, he first conceived a notion that, by depriving Valoria of her fortune, he might forward his designs upon her, since destitute and entirely indebted to him, he might, by a false appearance of generosity, obtain a claim to her gratitude; and in a heart so tender and sensible, what might not such a sentiment produce. This idea determined him, and, without a single sensation of remorse, he destroyed the paper that had secured to poor Valoria an ample independence, and the loss of which left her completely destitute.

To elude all suspicion in her mind, Montaldi, a few days after the funeral, presented the injured girl with a thousand crowns, for mourning, whose heart, la-

cerated as it was by the death of her dearest friend, was but little disposed to attend to pecuniary concerns; nor did she ever entertain an idea of the injustice she had suffered from, and which had rendered her recent loss doubly irreparable.

As soon as the Contessa's affairs were settled, Montaldi prepared for his departure from the castle d'Albano. On the evening preceding the day fixed for the journey, Eugenia and her friend went to pay a few visits in the village to the objects of her deceased mother's bounty. The poor creatures wept at the idea of losing the lovely beings who, from their earliest years, had been the dispensers of it, nor could their repeated assurances, that they should still be provided for, reconcile them to their departure. Their mention of the Contessa drew tears of sad regret from the eyes of their fair auditors,

and with an oppression of heart they were unable to overcome, they took leave of the poor villagers and returned home.

On reaching the castle, they found Montaldi (who had gone out with the steward on business) was not yet returned, and they went out upon the terrace to enjoy the coolness of the evening, while they waited for him.

The moon shone in an unclouded sky, and silvered every object with its beams; scarce a breeze agitated the tops of the orange and cypress tress, and no sound broke upon the ear, save the note of the nightingale from a neighbouring thicket. Arm in arm, Signora Montaldi and Valoria slowly traversed the terrace: both were silent; for the idea of quitting, perhaps for ever, the abode of their infancy, oppressed their spirits, and the tears of

Eugenia fell from her eyes, on the hand that rested on her arm.

"Stop, my Valoria," she suddenly exclaimed; do you not observe yon tall clump of limes at the extremity of the park? How often, in the sweet evenings of summer, have we danced there with the village maids, while our mother, seated on the grass, beheld our amusement with delight.

"Beneath us, in the garden, is the pavilion, where we used to sup with her so frequently: there you used to play to her on the harp, and I accompanied you with my voice. Oh! sweet and blissful days of my childhood, you are fled for ever, and with you my happiness!"

"What meanest thou, Eugenia?" replied Valoria, surprized at the exclama-

tion; "art thou not still blessed with an affectionate husband, a lovely infant, and the tenderness of thy poor Valoria? How can'st thou then be unhappy?"

"Alas! my beloved friend," said Eugenia, with a deep sigh; "happiness and I are, I fear, for ever parted: all my hopes are disappointed, and I awake from my short dream of bliss to lasting misery."—She paused, unable to proceed, and wept abundantly. Valoria flung her arms around her, and hiding her face on her bosom, joined her tears with hers. After a moment's silence she exclaimed:

"You say you are unhappy, my Eugenia, why then will you not repose your sorrows in the bosom of your friend, your sister? If they are incurable, let me at least enjoy the satisfaction of sharing them with you. Are we not as one? Have we ever yet had a joy or sorrow we have

not participated! Why then do you withhold from me your confidence?"

"Think not, Valoria," replied her friend, "it is from want of affection I have done so. No, believe me, it is not; but I would willingly conceal from all the world, the faults of him I love. To do so, however, any longer from you, is impossible, since you are now become an inmate of our family, and every circumstance of it must, of course, be known to you. Listen to me then, dear Valoria, and may your fate, my sweet friend, be more fortunate than your poor Eugenia's.

"In marrying Montaldi, you know, I was united to the man who, of all others, was most dear to me; I flattered myself I was equally beloved; and while the delusion lasted, I was the happiest of women. Alas! too soon was it dissipated for my peace; and if my husband *ever*

loved me, possession has long since annihilated every spark of affection. It was during our residence at Palermo I first became acquainted with the real character of Montaldi, which is briefly that of a libertine man of fashion.

"After the few first months of our marriage, his behaviour to me evinced the most perfect indifference; and from my friends I heard continually of his intrigues and extravagance, which were unbounded.

"Oh! Valoria, mayest thou never know, from sad experience, my feelings at this dreadful intelligence; long I struggled against conviction, and endeavoured to think he was misrepresented, but too soon I had demonstration of his unworthiness, too forcible to be rejected; and I awoke from my dream of bliss, the veriest wretch on earth. Yet never did I reproach him

with his conduct; but by every art, every tender endearment, sought to lure him back to me and virtue. Alas! my efforts were ineffectual; every day increased his coldness and indifference, and I resigned my attempts at his reformation in despair.

"In this state of mind society became tasteless, and I intreated Montaldi to suffer me to leave Palermo. At first he objected to my request; but the increasing embarrassment of his affairs rendered a temporary retirement necessary, and he proposed to me a journey to Calabria.

"We had been there but a few days before he grew tired of the 'dull uniformity,' as he termed it, in which we lived; and, under pretext of business, left me to go to Naples, where he remained till a fortnight before my confinement.

"The birth of my boy I fondly hoped

would once more regain the long estranged heart of his father; but I was doomed to encounter disappointment. Montaldi again deserted me for his Neapolitan friends, and I was left to mourn my lot in solitude. It was then my heart dwelt with bitterness on the endearments of my early youth, on the comforts of my parental home; and I would have given worlds for the society of my tender mother, of my gentle Valoria. Alas! I had no friend to soothe the hours of sickness and sorrow. The oppression of my mind retarded the recovery of my health; and, but for the sake of my poor boy, I could have wished the hand of Death to have terminated my sorrow."

Tears prevented Eugenia from proceeding. Valoria embraced her ardently, while she exclaimed with fervour:

"Oh! talk not so my dear, dear Eu-

genia; Montaldi has no doubt been highly blameable, but he cannot be so lost to virtue as you apprehend. Oh! no, my beloved friend, your tenderness, your patience, will restore him to a sense of his duty, and you will yet be happy; my heart assures me you will."

"Sweet comforter," replied Eugenia, "may thy prediction be verified!—for myself, I dare scarce indulge the hope—I see Montaldi coming," she continued, "dry up your tears, my Valoria, I would not have him see we have been weeping."

With a smile of tenderness Eugenia now advanced to meet her husband, and they repaired together to the saloon, where Valoria joined them, after staying behind a few minutes to wipe away the tears which the recital of her friend's unhappiness had caused her to shed. The conversation of the evening, however, had

made a deep impression on her mind; and the regard she had long cherished for Montaldi was now completely shaken, for she justly abhorred his deceit and ingratitude; and though her love for his injured wife, and her own dependent situation, made her wish to keep on good terms with him, yet she felt convinced she could never again consider him as she had formerly done, as a friend and brother.

An unprincipled libertine could never possess the confidence and affection of the artless Valoria; of her whose heart was the seat of candour and purity. No; it was impossible; and she lamented at once the fate of her adored friend, and the disappointment of her own expectations, which had hoped to find a fraternal friend and a generous protector in Montaldi.

The sun had scarcely risen when Va-

loria started from her bed, and hastily dressing herself, in a travelling habit, descended to the garden, to take a last farewell of the dear scenes of her infant happiness. It was only five o'clock; the dew still hung on every leaf and flower, and the feathered songsters were paying their matin hymns of gratitude to their Creator.

Valoria bent her knee, and with humble adoration offered her fervent prayer: the tear of ecstacy trembled in her eye, its glow mantled o'er her cheek, and her heart expanded, with humble confidence and submission, to the Author of all good. With lightened step she proceeded, and soon reached the pavilion, which she entered with that kind of emotion the soul of sensibility ever feels, on approaching a spot consecrated to its remembrance as the favourite haunt of a departed friend.—Every thing in it remained in the same

order it had been in when the Contessa had last visited it; for Valoria and her lovely daughter had been there only once since their return to d'Albano, and with a sort of superstitious reverence they had refrained from moving any thing that had been placed there by their lamented parent.

Some books and music lay scattered on the table, and a harp rested in a recess of one of the windows. Valoria gazed around her with indescribable emotion; then taking up the instrument, o'er whose strings the Contessa's hand had so often moved, she pressed it to her lips, wetted it with her tears, and hanging it on her arm, resolved, at all events, not to leave it behind her.

Her eyes again wandered on every object in this beloved retreat; and a sort of fascination seemed almost without her own

consent to retain her there, and she was only awakened to a sense of her situation, by the approach of a servant, who informed her that breakfast was waiting.

Silently, and in tears, Valoria quitted the pavilion, after gathering a bunch of the roses and jessamine with which it was entwined, and which had been planted by the Contessa.

As they proceeded to the house, Valoria, on raising her eyes to his face, perceived the old man, who accompanied her, had been weeping, and tenderly inquired the cause of his distress.

"Ah! Signora," replied Iago, "can I help being afflicted when my dear young mistresses are going to leave, perhaps for ever, the castle d'Albano, and all their old dependants and domestics, who had hoped to have closed their eyes in their service."

"Console yourself, my good friend," replied Valoria; "you will, I hope, see us again, many, many times before that day; and be assured that, though absent, we shall not forget you or your services."

"God bless you, sweet Signora, for your goodness, and verify your prediction. We shall all pray every day of our live's, for your happiness and Signora Eugenia's."

"Thank you, my good Iago," replied Valoria, "and let me request you, in my absence, to take care of my favourite pavilion, and do not forget my birds in the aviary, and the flowers your late dear lady was so fond of."

Iago promised faithfully to obey her orders; and Valoria, after presenting him with a token of her remembrance, bade

him farewell, and entered the castle. Montaldi and Eugenia were already seated at the breakfast table; and after a hasty repast they entered the travelling chaise that was to convey them from d'Albano.

CHAPTER IV.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strewn;
Not a friend, not a friend shall greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.

NOTHING particular occurred during their journey; and at the end of a few days Montaldi and his companions arrived in safety at the castle de Retirero, which was situated a short distance from the coast. The approach to it was through a rocky and thickly wooded dell, presenting, at intervals, bold and picturesque views of the ocean. An extensive wood spread itself on one side of the building, which was constructed in the Gothic style, and of great dimensions.

Accustomed to the elegant simplicity and modern structure of the villa d'Albano, Valoria beheld, with an emotion of surprise and admiration, mingled with awe, the lofty towers and battlements of the building before her, and continued to survey it in silence, when she was awakened from her reverie by the carriage driving into the court-yard of the mansion. Several servants were in waiting to receive them, and they were conducted through a large Gothic hall to a parlour beyond, where Eugenia left them, and soon returned with her infant, whom she placed in the arms of Valoria, intreating her, by the love that had ever subsisted between them, to transfer a share of her affection to her boy.

Our heroine tenderly embraced the little Adolpho, (for so he was named,) while Montaldi, coldly remarking that he was very much grown, requested his wife

to send him away, till they had taken some refreshment after their journey. Valoria, provoked at the conduct of the insensible father, exclaimed with warmth;

"Indeed, Signor, I cannot let him go, for I have scarcely seen him yet. Oh! he is beautiful, so engaging, he will be a constant source of amusement to me."

"I did not know you were so fond of children, my fair friend," replied Montaldi.

"I was ever partial to them, Signor, though *I am no parent*, and surely I owe a double share of my regard to the child of my Eugenia."

Montaldi, somewhat abashed at her reproof, was silent, and made no further opposition to her desires; and during the rest of the day he sought, by the most

pointed attention to the little Adolpho, to efface the bad opinion he was fearful Valoria had conceived of his sensibility.

Several days were spent in viewing the castle and the grounds belonging to it; the wild and romantic beauty of the surrounding scenery particularly delighted our heroine, who was an enthusiastic admirer of nature; and some hours in every day were spent in riding or walking over the adjacent country. Eugenia was sometimes her companion in these excursions, Montaldi always was; and as his behaviour to her was ever strictly consistent with the most rigid propriety, she could not, without deviating from that politeness which was due to the husband of her friend, refuse his attendance.

It was on the improvement of these precious moments Montaldi rested his hopes of success in his infamous scheme

of seduction; and by every fascinating art did he endeavour to obtain an interest in the heart of his intended victim.

The more, however, he became acquainted with the disposition of Valoria, the more difficult did the task appear. He saw that, though possessed of the most tender and sensible heart, and too artless and good herself to suspect any ill in others, her soul shrunk with horror from the most distant idea of vice, and that her regard for Eugenia was too firmly rooted to suffer her to injure her, even in thought. He saw too, that, though Valoria ever behaved to him with the most perfect politeness, he neither possessed her affection or confidence; and he justly concluded it arose from the knowledge she had obtained of his conduct and principles.

Humiliating as this conviction was, it

did not serve to amend his heart; but he saw deception was necessary to remove the impression she had received of his character, and with this design he assumed the appearance of the most tender and attentive husband; and his child, so long neglected, was now beheld with delight.

Eugenia saw, with a rapture almost too great for her feelings, this change in Montaldi's conduct. It awakened in her heart a sensation of joy she had long been a stranger to; and imputing it, in some measure, to the counsel of Valoria, whose good opinion she saw Montaldi was anxious to obtain, she became a thousand times dearer to her heart, which little suspected the cause that had produced an effect she so much rejoiced in.

Several months passed on in uninterrupted harmony, and both Eugenia and

her friend began to feel, in some degree, the happiness they had experienced previous to the death of the lamented Contessa. The mornings were usually spent, by Valoria, with Eugenia and the sweet Adolpho, to whom she became every day more attached; and her evenings in rambling about the park, sometimes alone, sometimes with Montaldi; who, on these occasions, endeavoured, by the elegance of his conversation, and the justness of his taste, to ingratiate himself into her favour, and render his society agreeable.

In a short time, however, a striking change appeared in his manners. He became restless and unhappy; a deep and settled depression seemed to have taken possession of his mind; his manners were melancholy and reserved: he shunned all society, and spent hour after hour in wandering alone in the solitary woods around the castle.

A change so sudden and unexpected deeply afflicted his wife, and gave no small degree of uneasiness to Valoria, who saw, with surprise, that Montaldi more particularly shunned and avoided her; and if they met by accident, seemed always impatient till he was gone. Conscious of having in no way given any cause of offence, she was both hurt and offended at Montaldi's conduct to her, though his evident depression of spirits and dejected look, excited her unfeigned pity, mixed with wonder, at the cause of his strange unhappiness.

One evening she went out to enjoy her usual walk; Eugenia declined accompanying her, and she strolled alone to a little temple in the park, which was situated on an eminence, and commanded a fine view of the sea. Valoria, whose mind was occupied by the enchanting prospect that met her eye, on every pause

she made, advanced slowly, and was just entering the building, when a deep sigh startled her. She looked around for the cause, and beheld Montaldi reclined on a sofa in the temple. She would have retreated, but it was too late; he had caught a glance of her receding figure; and springing forward seized her hand, imploring her, in an impassioned tone, not to fly from him.

"I had no intention of doing so, Signor," replied Valoria; "but I thought my presence might be an interruption to your meditations."

"An interruption!" exclaimed Montaldi, warmly; "Oh my God!—" then suddenly checking himself, he added,—"But you have reason to think so, Valoria, after my late conduct. It has doubtless offended you; yet did you know my motives for it, you would perhaps

be more inclined to pity than condemn me."

"You are not accountable to me, Signor," replied Valoria, somewhat surprized at his strange address; "for any mode of conduct you may think proper to adopt; yet I will own your behaviour to me of late has been beyond my comprehension, since I am not conscious of having offended you."

"And do you suppose it possible, my lovely Valoria, for you to offend me? Oh no: whatever you say or do admits of no improvement in my eyes."

"You compliment me, Signor," returned Valoria, smiling; "for I do not feel myself deserving of such praises; but I forgive your flattery, because it convinces me of your returning cheerfulness; and" added she, still more playfully, "your

late strange humour has made us all very dull. Get rid of it, Signor, for I assure you it does not become you at all."

"I would willingly do so, Valoria," said Montaldi, "since you wish it, but it is impossible. I am wretched, and for ever doomed to be so."

"You, wretched, Signor Montaldi! for what?"

Montaldi caught her hand and grasped it with violence, as he exclaimed—

"Dare I tell you, Valoria? Dare I hope for your forgiveness?"

"Do not torture me with suspence," she replied, alarmed with his looks and incoherent language. "If the cause of your distress concerns me, reveal it at once. If you have injured me, (which I

cannot conceive) and sincerely repent of your crime, be assured of my ready forgiveness.

"Forgive then," cried Montaldi, sinking on his knees; "forgive the rash man who here at your feet avows his ardent ungovernable love, and implores your pity for his sufferings."

Valoria stood for some moments almost petrified with astonishment, and doubting the evidence of her senses; "Love me!" she at length exclaimed, in breathless agitation; "Oh Heavens! how have I ever merited this cruel insult?"

"Do not consider what I have said as an insult," replied Montaldi; "for I call Heaven to witness I never intended it as such. Long have I concealed in my bosom the flame that consumes me, tho' its destructive influence was secretly

preying on my health and life. Nor should I ever have revealed the important secret, had you not, as it were, drawn it from me. Oh, in pity, regard me not with those angry averted looks. Death itself is preferable to a sense of your displeasure. Too well I see my presumptuous declaration has offended you; yet did you know my unspeakable wretchedness, your gentle heart could not deny me your pity."

"I do pity you, Signor, sincerely," returned Valoria; "that blessed as you are with the most lovely, the most amiable of wives, you can bestow a thought on one every way so much her inferior."

Montaldi was silent a few moments. His first impulse was to avow to Valoria the passion he had conceived for her, from their first interview, but second considerations checked him, for his knowledge

of her principles justly taught him to suppose that a confession of his deceitful conduct, in regard to Eugenia, would not serve to raise him higher in her good opinion; he contented himself, therefore, by the most artful and specious arguments, to excuse his love; and with a shew of the utmost contrition, with all the sighs and tears he so well knew how to assume, repeatedly implored her forgiveness for his rash avowal, declaring that for the future, whatever he might suffer, he would never again offend her, by mentioning the subject.

Completely deceived by his artful conduct, Valoria could not doubt of his remorse, and was too generous to deny to the pretended penitent, the pardon he so earnestly solicited. Montaldi dared not, at present, intreat for more; and with well affected timidity offered his arm to Valoria to conduct her to the castle.

The walk was a silent one, for both were absorbed in reflection; and the adventure of this evening had excited a very painful emotion in the breast of our heroine, who felt both grieved and humiliated at Montaldi's declaration.

From his late conduct she had cherished the most sanguine hopes of his reformation; and destitute of the vanity that might have led her to impute to herself this desirable change, she now lamented this new blow to Eugenia's happiness, whose sole bliss consisted in her husband's affections, and a thousand times she wondered at the insensibility and fickleness which could render him indifferent to her perfections.

The gloom that had lately clouded the mind and manners of Montaldi, seemed now, in some measure, to disperse; his cheerfulness again returned at intervals,

and he no longer shunned the society of his wife and her too charming friend. Valoria, however, cautiously avoided every occasion of being alone with him, for she resolved never to listen again to a repetition of the discourse he had formerly held to her; and, notwithstanding Montaldi's looks frequently reproached her with unkindness, she firmly adhered to her resolution, and never walked with him, unaccompanied by Eugenia.

One afternoon Montaldi rode over to a neighbouring town; and as the weather was remarkably fine, Valoria determined in the evening to visit a romantic grotto in the park. Domestic affairs prevented Eugenia from attending her friend, and she accordingly set out alone on her intended excursion.

The path to the grotto lay through a part of the wood that bounded one side of

the castle, and the rays of the setting sun gilded the thickly interwoven boughs with its yellow beams. The grotto, formed of roots, and embowered with cypress and myrtle, was situated at the bottom of a deep and craggy dell, and almost hid from observation by the thick shades that surrounded it.

Valoria entered the recess, and flung herself on the mossy seat. Her fingers flew lightly over the strings of her harp, which she had brought with her; and a stranger who had beheld her elegant figure and graceful attitude, would have supposed her the Genius of the place.

A rustling among the branches interrupted her employment, and Montaldi suddenly appeared before her. His face was flushed as if with drinking, and his eyes flashed a thousand inexplicable passions. Alarmed at his sudden appearance,

and the state he was in, Valoria attempted to pass him, but he placed himself before the entrance, and seizing her hand, exclaimed, in an exulting tone:

"Ah! ah! enchantress, you would fly me, but I have you now secure, and by Heavens! you escape not, till you have heard me."

A glow of indignation succeeded the pale hue of terror on Valoria's cheek, and she replied with haughtiness; "And by what right, Signor, do you dare to detain me here a prisoner. I insist on my immediate release, or you may, perhaps, have cause to repent of your insolent behaviour."

"Your threats are impotent," returned Montaldi, forcing her back to the seat she had quitted; "and your efforts to escape from me will be fruitless. Long

have I sought for this opportunity of speaking to you, and I am now resolved on being heard."

Valoria trembled, yet she endeavoured to appear calm; and disengaging her hands from those of her persecutor, she sat down on the bank, while she exclaimed in a firm tone:

"Well, Signor, I am ready to listen to you. For what purpose have you sought this conversation, and wherefore do you use this ungentlemanlike violence to obtain my attention, if your subject is fit for the ear of innocence."

Montaldi fell at her feet, and again seizing her struggling hand, covered it with kisses.

"Valoria," he cried with vehemence, "it is no longer in my power to feign.

I love you to madness, and mine thou shalt be, though all the powers of heaven and earth were conspired together to oppose my purpose. Thy cold indifference, thy disdainful coyness, serve but to increase the flame thy matchless beauty has kindled; I ask not thy pity, but thy love, and here at thy feet I swear to live for thee alone, sole idol of my soul."

"Signor," replied the terrified girl, "why do you thus insult and persecute a defenceless orphan? Say, oh say! is this conduct worthy the husband of Eugenia?"—Curses on Eugenia," he replied; "she is the bane of my happiness, the object of my detestation. Thy love for her has hitherto steeled thy heart to my prayers. Yet bethink thee, Valoria, and let not your foolish notions of duty and virtue render you blind to your own interest. Remember, you are an orphan, entirely destitute and dependent on the

caprice of others. Beauty and graces like yours, were not formed to be buried in obscurity. Listen then to the voice of love, and it shall lead thee to scenes of delight, where every pleasure shall attend your call. A house at Naples, a villa where all the charms of Nature and Art are united, a brilliant establishment, every gift that fortune can lavish on you, all will be too little to prove my boundless love. Wherever you appear, adulation will attend your steps. Montaldi, the humblest, the most ardent of your adorers, will live but to promote your happiness; and as soon as ever I am released from the hateful tie which now enthrals me, I swear by Heaven, to give you a legal claim to my name and fortune." The glow of shame crimsoned the cheeks of Valoria, and indignation sparkled in her fine expressive eyes. She arose, and exclaimed with an air of ineffable dignity, "Cease, infamous wretch! and know Va-

loria scorns alike thy offers and thyself. Poor and destitute as I am of every friend, but her you would teach me to injure, I prefer the possession of conscious virtue, to the enjoyment of a diadem. Blush, if you are susceptible of shame, at the undeserved insult you have offered to an innocent girl, and remember from henceforth I owe you nothing but my contempt and abhorrence."

"Ah! is it so?" replied Montaldi; "then learn, proud fair one, since you disdain my love, to tremble at my power. Reflect, ere it is too late, on my proposals. For here I vow, if you consent not to them, this moment seals your fate irrevocably."—"Never," returned Valoria; "never will I become the willing votary of vice."

"Enough," exclaimed Montaldi, catching her violently in his arms: "soon

shalt thou learn to humble that haughty spirit, and force shall here accomplish all my wishes."

With a desperate effort Valoria disengaged herself from his hold, and falling on her knees, she clasped her hands together, while tears streamed in torrents down her pallid cheek. "Oh! Montaldi," she said in a voice whose melodious tones might have melted the most obdurate heart, "by all your hopes of mercy spare me, take my life, but leave me, oh! leave me my innocence. Too well I know I am in your power; be generous, and use it not unworthily; defend me from yourself; you cannot, I am sure you cannot be cruel to a helpless being, who on her knees implores your pity for her youth, her sex, her unprotected innocence."

Montaldi, with eyes flashing with licentious passion, gazed on the lovely

pleader. For a moment her tears, her imploring accents, her moving attitude, awakened a ray of pity in his breast; but her charms, to which her situation added a new lustre, stifled the soft emotion, and he again advanced towards her—when, with a motion the effect of frenzy, Valoria broke from him, and rushed out of the grotto. Montaldi pursued her flying footsteps, and was within a few paces of his intended victim, when a wood cutter suddenly made his appearance, and attracted by the screams of Valoria, hastened up to her, and respectfully inquired what was the matter.

"Protect me! oh protect me!" she exclaimed, "from yon villain," at the same time pointing to Montaldi, who, fearful of being known by the peasant, retreated hastily, and again entered the grotto, cursing the wood-cutter, Valoria, and himself, for suffering her to escape.

The agitated girl in the mean time had reached the castle, under the protection of the peasant, who she liberally recompensed for his trouble, at the same time desiring him to be silent as to what had passed, which he readily promised. Her first impulse was to acquaint Eugenia with every circumstance of her husband's conduct; but the idea of what her friend would suffer, deterred her from doing so. She justly considered that a knowledge of his vallainy could serve no other purpose but to distress her.

"And shall I," she exclaimed, "when she fondly indulges the idea of Montaldi's renewed affection, again tear open all the wounds of her heart by this horrid information. No; never, Valoria, shalt thou be a voluntary cause of anguish to thy beloved friend. Heaven; who has now preserved me from his violence, will still continue to defend me, and for thy peace, Eugenia, I will be silent."

Unwilling to appear before Signora Montaldi in her present agitation, Valoria immediately retired to her apartment, from whence she sent an excuse to her friend, that being fatigued with her walk, and somewhat indisposed with a headach, she was gone to bed and did not wish to be disturbed. During the following day Montaldi was absent, and it was late in the evening before he returned. He appeared confused and dejected, and did not once venture to address Valoria, who on her side was equally silent, and as soon as supper was over, retired, to avoid the presence of one who she regarded with a species of horror.

It was Valoria's usual custom to walk before breakfast, but fearful of meeting Montaldi, she had seated herself by a window with a book in her hand, when a servant entered with a letter. "From my master, Signora," said she, "who has

just set out for Palermo." Valoria still more surprized, broke open the seal, and read as follows:

"After the events of the other evening, you will doubtless, Valoria, wonder at my presumption in thus daring to address you. To attempt any justification of my late conduct would only be to aggravate my crime. Nor could even the situation I was then in, be alleged as an excuse for it. I dare not hope for your forgiveness, I dare not venture to ask it; yet did you know my remorse, my despair, almost bordering on frenzy, you might, perhaps——but no, it is impossible; I have offended beyond all hopes of forgiveness. Only do not curse me, for I have done it a thousand times already. Oh! that I could for ever lose all remembrance of the past; that I could for ever bury in oblivion the events of that

fatal hour. Vain wish; it cannot be—and the reflection will pursue me to the last moment of my existence.

"I bless you most fervently, Valoria, for keeping this transaction from my wife. Alas! she has already suffered enough from my infidelity, without this dreadful addition. When you receive this letter I shall be on my way to Palermo, from whence I shall not return till I can behold you with such sentiments as become the husband of Eugenia. Let this voluntary banishment deprecate your just indignation for the conduct of the repentant, and truly wretched

"MONTALDI."

Though Valoria did not give implicit credit to Montaldi's declaration of repentance, yet she sincerely rejoiced at his departure. Not doubting, but during his

stay at Palermo, some new object would engage his attentions, and most probably entirely release her from his persecutions.

Three weeks of his absence passed swiftly away, in the society of Eugenia and the sweet Adolpho, who, next to her friend, was the dearest object of Valoria's affections, and whose infant beauties were already the perfect epitome of his lovely mother's.

At the end of a month Montaldi returned, accompanied by several gentlemen, whom he introduced to Eugenia as old acquaintances. Her reception of them was polite, but cold; and convinced Valoria that they were more indebted to Montaldi than their own merits for a welcome from the fair hostess. The castle now became a scene of gaiety, if riot deserves that name. The mornings were spent by Montaldi and his friends in sport-

ing, and the chase; the evenings in gaming and carousals, and the day frequently dawned on their nocturnal banquets. Eugenia and her friend were often compelled by his commands, to grace the board with their presence, though neither his anger nor intreaties could prevail on them to remain after the cloth was removed.

Among the guests who accompanied Montaldi to the castle, was a young Neapolitan, named Julio de Orsino, no less distinguished from his companions by the gracefulness of his person, than by the elegance of his manners, which were modest and unassuming. Disgusted with the conduct of Montaldi and his dissolute associates, he absented himself from their parties, and sought the society of his wife and Valoria, who, prejudiced from seeing him in such company, gave him at first a cold reception; but a little time convinced them, chance had introduced

him to the society in which they had first beheld him. The amiable Julio was in every respect unlike their other guests. Orsino soon passed all his time with the fair friends, and neither the railleries or sarcasms of his companions, could persuade him to join their parties. Montaldi coldly desired that his guest might be left to pursue his own plan of amusement, and from that time his absence was no longer noticed.

Highly accomplished, and possessed of a cultivated mind, the society of Julio was a real acquisition to Eugenia and her friend; in the morning he read to them while they worked, or entertained them with music, in which he was a great proficient; and in the evening attended them in their walks, which he enlivened by the charm of his conversation.

After remaining with him near a month

Montaldi's guest talked of returning to Palermo, and Julio, though unwillingly, prepared to accompany them; when, to his great surprize, his host intreated him to prolong his stay, "adding, that being engaged for a few weeks at Naples, he should consider himself under an obligation, if he would continue at the castle to protect the ladies in his absence. Flattered by this mark of attention, Julio readily acquiesced in his request, and the next day Montaldi and his friends set out.

Nothing worthy of notice occurred in his absence, except that Orsino daily gained ground in the estimation of his fair entertainers; and, perfectly happy in their society, he thought not of the necessity of his return home, till the arrival of letters of consequence from Naples obliged him to fix a time for his departure. A few days before that in which Julio was to commence his journey,

Montaldi returned to the castle. His manners were gloomy and reserved, and secluded entirely in his own apartment, his mind was apparently agitated with important affairs. The day before Julio's departure, he emerged from his retirement and joined his family in the saloon. The idea of a speedy separation threw a damp over the spirits of the whole party; for it needed not a long acquaintance with Orsino to render his society estimable. Supper was served, but Montaldi declined eating; and during the repast, traversed the room with hurried steps. Some unusual cause of agitation seemed to oppress him; and his looks, dark, gloomy, and at times almost ferocious, alternately regarded those around him. As soon as the cloth was removed he quitted the room; and Valoria heard him, in crossing the hall, command his confidential servant, Fernando, to attend him in the library. An hour elapsed and he returned

not; and Julio rising from his seat, advanced to the sofa on which Signora Montaldi and Valoria were sitting, and taking a hand of each, placed them in both of his, as he exclaimed:

"As I set out very early to-morrow, I will now, with their permission, take leave of my fair friends, and thank them for all the attentions that they have condescended to honour me with; the remembrance of which will ever be cherished with the most fervent gratitude."

"Farewell, Signor Orsino," replied Eugenia. "May you enjoy all health and happiness, and when you again visit Calabria, be assured it will give unfeigned pleasure to us all, to see you."

Julio bowed gracefully over the hand he held, as he thanked her for her goodness; then kissing that of Valoria, he

again bid them farewell, and quitted the apartment in search of Montaldi, while Eugenia and her friend retired to their chambers.

It was late in the morning before our heroine arose, and on entering the breakfast room, she found Montaldi alone. He satuted her politely, at the same time declaring, he thought she intended to sleep till noon, and concluded by inquiring if she had seen Eugenia.

"No, Signor," she replied; "I have not, perhaps you can inform me if she has risen."

"Indeed," said Montaldi, "I have not seen her since last night at supper; for after Signor Orsino joined me in the library, we sat together till very late; and he had scarcely retired, when, overpowered by the effect of the liberal potations

we had pledged each other, I fell asleep on the sofa, from which I have not risen above half an hour."

As he ceased speaking he rung the bell; and on the entrance of a servant, desired her to inform her lady that breakfast was waiting. In a few moments she returned, with every mark of terror in her countenance, wildly exclaiming:

"Oh, Signor! my lady is not to be found."

"Not to be found!" replied Montaldi and Valoria in the same breath; "what do you mean?"

"Indeed Signor," she returned, it is very true; my lady has certainly never been in bed last night;" and without giving her time to finish, Montaldi rushed from the room, while Valoria, pale and

trembling, followed his footsteps. On entering Eugenia's chamber, they plainly perceived she had not rested there that night. Some of the apparel she had worn the preceding day was scattered about upon the chairs; and the picture of her husband, which Valoria well remembered to have remarked on her bosom, lay on the toilet. Every drawer in the chamber was open and emptied of its contents; and there was nothing that did not announce a premeditated flight.

"Yes!" exclaimed Montaldi gloomily, after a long silence—"It must be so; she has eloped with Orsino; but by all that is sacred I will be revenged."

"Montaldi," said Valoria faintly, and laying her hand on his arm: "reflect a moment on what you say. Are you sure, are you perfectly sure. It is, it must be impossible!"

She could add no more; a deadly sickness seized her heart, and she would have fallen to the ground, if Montaldi had not prevented her. On recovering her senses, she found herself in her own room, and Floretta weeping beside her.

"Where is Signor Montaldi?" she exclaimed, starting from the bed. "Don't deceive me, I must know immediately."

"Gone to Naples, Signora; and before he set out, he desired me to give you this letter, directed to you, which we found in my lady's dressing-room, and to apologize to you for having broken the seal. Valoria, with a trembling hand, took the open paper; it was in the writing of Eugenia, and contained only the following lines, written in an unsteady character.

"When you receive this, my ever loved Valoria, I shall be far from hence,

never to return again. Long have I been alienated from every species of happiness, and devoted my youth and affections to an unfaithful husband. But the delusion is at an end; and, under the auspices of love, I fly with the most amiable of men to enjoy the blessing I have, till now, been a stranger to, that of mutual affection. Farewell, Valoria, for ever. Forget, if possible, that I ever existed; but do not abandon my boy; I dare not dwell on that theme. May every blessing descend upon you both, once more adieu.

"EUGENIA."

For some moments Valoria almost doubted the evidence of her senses. A thousand tumultuous ideas crowded upon her mind, and she involuntarily asked herself if it was possible, that Eugenia, the modest, tender, virtuous Eugenia; she whose whole life had been past in the discharge of her duties, should at once

throw off every resemblance of what she had been and become—oh, horror of horrors—a faithless wife! The more she dwelt on this supposition, the more improbable did it appear. In vain did she retrace every moment Julio had passed at the castle, in order to throw some light on this mysterious affair. To Eugenia, his manners had ever been marked with respect, which had been returned on her side with friendly politeness; but never had there appeared the slightest degree of familiarity between them, that could have offended the most scrupulous delicacy. Again Valoria perused the fatal letter, and again her belief in Eugenia's innocence was shaken. That she had fled from the castle was beyond contradiction; that she had done so voluntarily, every circumstance seemed to confirm; and Valoria shed the bitterest tear over the defection of her adored friend from virtue. The day passed with our heroine in

grief till then unknown; which was greatly augmented by the return of Montaldi, with the information that every attempt to trace the fugitives had been ineffectual. His sorrow and despair appeared so natural, and was expressed so eloquently, that the feeling heart of Valoria forgot, at that moment, the causes she had to be displeased with him, and sincerely sympathized in his misfortune. When they parted for the night, Montaldi took her hand and pressed it in his, saying mournfully: "To your kindness, my gentle friend, I commend my poor Adolpho; not for my own sake, for that I dare not do; but in pity to the lost Eugenia, let him not feel a mother's desertion."

Valoria replied only by her tears; and ere she retired to rest, went to Adolpho's apartment, and taking him in her arms, wept over the deserted babe, and fervently

implored Heaven to pardon his deluded mother, and lead her back to virtue.

Several days passed without any new occurrence taking place in the castle de Retirero; and Valoria, awoke in some measure from the lethargy of grief that had benumbed her faculties, began to reflect seriously on her situation. To remain under the protection of Montaldi in the absence of his wife, and with no other female to sanction her residence in his house, was, she justly conceived, inconsistent with decorum, even had she more confidence in his honour than she felt at present, and regarding him in the light she now did, was an impossibility. A convent presented itself as the most eligible asylum; and she resolved, the first occasion that presented itself, to inform Montaldi of her desire to seek a refuge in one. An opportunity soon oc-

curred of putting her design in execution. Montaldi, though surprized and apparently hurt at her resolution, made no opposition to it, only intreating her, as he was going to Naples the next day, not to leave the castle till his return. "I had hoped, indeed," added he, "for my child's sake, you would have continued here, to preserve him from feeling more severely the loss he has sustained."

"I shall always wish, Signor, to do every thing in my power for my sweet Adolpho: but, but—"

"I understand you," replied Montaldi. "You are afraid to trust my protection; but no matter—if you have no objection, I will while at Naples, make inquiries for some convent proper to receive you; and you will then, perhaps, cease to doubt the disinterestedness of my regards."

Secluded from all society but that of her little charge, Valoria spent the time of Montaldi's absence in ruminations over the past, and melancholy anticipations of the future: sick of a spot where every scene awakened the most poignant recollections, she eagerly looked forward to his return in the hope of leaving it. He came at last; but for some days nothing fell from him concerning Valoria's removal, whose timidity made her shrink from the alteration that would most probably ensue, if he should express himself averse to her wishes. Contrary to her expectations, Montaldi himself introduced the subject, by inquiring if she still continued in the same mind, in regard to entering a convent? "I do, Signor," replied Valoria; "and have waited impatiently the result of your inquiries at Naples."—"Is your residence here, then, so very disagreeable," said Montaldi in a tone

of displeasure, "that you are so anxious to leave it? Cannot the attentions of the man who adores you, who would dedicate every moment to your amusement, reconcile you to the solitude of de Retirero?"

"This conversation, Signor," returned Valoria, "has nothing to do with what I was saying. Nor is it such as I can listen to with propriety."

"You may, Valoria," he replied with energy. "The conduct of Eugenia has removed the greatest obstacle to my happiness, and here is a dispensation that enables me to make you a legal offer of my hand and fortune;" at the same time drawing a paper from his pocket, and falling at our heroine's feet, he conjured her, by every argument that art or passion could devise, to accept his hand. Valoria listened to him with mingled emotions of surprize and indignation; and

drawing back the hand he had seized, replied with firmness: "Be assured, Signor, I will never consent to exalt my happiness on the destruction of my ruined friend. And even had I never known Eugenia, the Signor Montaldi is not the man I could ever except as a husband. Permit me, therefore, to thank him for the honour he would confer upon me, and express my wishes that some amiable woman, more ignorant than myself of his principles, may one day constitute his happiness."

"Is this, Valoria," exclaimed Montaldi in a voice almost inarticulate with rage, "your final determination?"—"Irrevocably so, Signor." "Very well, proud girl," he replied; "and now hear mine. Scorned, despised as I am, remember you are in my power. Nay, do not tremble, I shall not use it violently. That plan has

failed, and a thousand times since have I cursed the evil genius that urged me to adopt it. I here, however, offer you honourable reparation for the past, and solemnly swear that you never quit this castle but as my wife."—"And by what right, Signor," said Valoria, with as much firmness as her agitation would permit; "do you deprive me of liberty?"

"By that right, my fair questioner, that governs one half, at least, of the world; inclination, and the power to gratify it. You despise the love that wishes to make you happy. It remains, therefore, only for me, since you are blind to your own interest, to compel you to embrace that which will promote it. I shall quit de Retiero for some time, and during my absence you will have leisure to reflect on the alternative I offer you—marriage, or perpetual imprisonment." Valoria's heart swelled with indignation and contempt;

but she disdained Montaldi too much to attempt any reply, and retired immediately to her own apartment, the door of which was locked upon her by Montaldi; and she now found herself, from a state of free and unrestrained liberty, become the prisoner of the man who, of all others, was the object of her disdain and aversion.

Sad and melancholy were the hours Valoria passed in her new abode, secluded from all society, even that of the little Adolpho, who, according to the orders Montaldi had left, was not permitted to approach her. Her gentleness and uncomplaining patience, so far wrought on the stern nature of Jacintha her keeper, that she prevailed on her to bring her a few books from the library; and these, with her harp, which she always kept in her own room, were her only amusement.

Deprived of the benefit of air and ex-

ercise, the roses of Valoria's cheek began to fade, and langour and lassitude pervaded her whole frame; yet the energy of her mind continued in all its vigour; and her resolution never to wed Montaldi became more rooted than ever: for, gentle as her disposition naturally was, when once convinced of the lawfulness and necessity of any measure she chose to adopt, the determination of Valoria was not to be shaken; and this innate firmness of mind made her adhere strictly to a resolution of suffering any thing from his tyranny, rather than become the wife of one whose principles she detested, and whose person was perfectly indifferent to her.

Several weeks passed on in gloomy sameness, and Valoria, whose indisposition increased daily, felt an oppression so heavy upon her spirits, that she almost wished for death to release her from an

existence so painful to herself, and so useless to others.

It was one evening, after a day of uncommon depression, that our heroine retired to bed earlier than usual. Unable to sleep, she lay retracing the past, when the castle clock tolled the hour of twelve, and at the same time the door of the gallery leading to her chamber was softly unlocked. Somewhat surprised at so unusual a circumstance, Valoria listened, and distinctly heard a man's voice, speaking in whispering accents. Alarmed, she softly quitted her bed, and throwing a dressing gown over her, stole cautiously to the door. In a few moments she distinguished another voice, which pronounced, distinctly, "Well, for my part, Carolo, I would I had never undertaken the business; I already repent me of it."

"Fool!" returned his companion, has-

not the noble Signor recompensed us well; and has not he promised still more, when the affair is finished? You had not these cowardly scruples before. For shame! for shame! Gremio; is it for men of metal like us to be such dastards?" "Hush! hush!" replied the other, in lower tones: "some one, perhaps lies in this chamber, and may hear us."

The ruffians, for such their discourse declared them to be, now spoke so low, that Valoria, though all ear, was unable to distinguish a single word.

When convinced, from their retreating steps, that they had passed her chamber, she softly unclosed the door, and looking down the gallery beheld the objects of her alarm at the further end. The foremost held in his hand a drawn dagger and a lamp, and the other a key; which applying to what was apparently a pannel in

the wall, it gave way, and they both disappeared through the aperture. For a moment Valoria stood undecided how to act. An undefinable emotion, however, led her on to discover, if possible, the meaning of this mystery; and softly gliding from her room, she took her station at the extremity of the gallery, where she waited in anxious expectation the return of the men. Approaching footsteps at length reached her ears, and the door slowly receding, they both entered the gallery. "Hark! Carolo," said the foremost, stopping; "did you not hear a noise?" —"Pshaw!" replied his companion; "it is nothing but the wind: here, make haste and lock the door, I am in haste to be gone. Why, what ails thee, fool, that you tremble so? give me the key, I will do it myself, while you hold the lamp." at that moment Valoria glided from her retreat, and stood directly before the two

ruffians. The lamp fell from the hands of the trembling Gremio, who fled precipitately to the door which led from the gallery, exclaiming, at the same time, "Oh, it is her! it is her! it is the ghost of the murdered lady!"—For a moment Carolo continued behind his companion, with his eyes fixed on the countenance of Valoria; which, pale and ghastly as it was with the emotions of her mind, did indeed resemble that of a phantom; while her voice, in hollow accents, repeated these words: "Tremble, villain!"

Carolo did indeed tremble; and dashing down the key, fled after his companion; and Valoria following him, locked the door, to prevent all possibility of their return.

Deeply impressed by the words which had fallen from the affrighted Gremio, Valoria determined to pursue the adven-

ture, and seizing the expiring lamp, she pushed open the eventful door, and entered an apartment, large and entirely without furniture. The lofty walls were covered with mould, the windows stopped up, and the floor broken in many places. At the end of this desolated room was a door, that easily gave way, and Valoria found herself at the bottom of a ruinated staircase. For a moment she hesitated whether or not to proceed. A secret impulse, however, seemed to lead her on, and carefully ascending the stairs that creaked under her, she reached a small landing, on one side of which was another door. Again she hesitated, and again a moment's reflection determined her to go on, and drawing back the bolts that fastened it, they admitted her into a small square apartment, enlightened only by one window plaeed very high in the wall, through which the pale moon beams darted along the floor. A table and chair stood near

it; and a few embers were still alive on the hearth. Surprized at these signs of inhabitation, in a place so desolate, Valoria stood motionless with astonishment, when a deep groan struck upon her ear. She listened attentively; it was repeated; and looking fearfully around her, she discovered a ray of light gleam from one side of the wall. She advanced, and holding up her lamp, perceived that it proceeded from a door which she pushed open, and entered an apartment similar in dimensions to the one she had quitted. A taper burnt in the chimney, and in a recess stood a bed, on which was extended a human form; but of what kind, the size of the room, and the dim light, would not allow her to distinguish. Valoria paused; and overcome by an inexplicable emotion, leaned for support against the wall. A fainter groan from the bed aroused her to a sense of her situation, and making a violent effort to conquer her feelings, she advanced towards it.

A stream of blood that dyed the floor by the bed-side, chilled that of Valoria in her veins, who remarked that the clothes were spotted in the same manner. Raising her lamp, she eagerly surveyed the object extended upon the couch. It was a female, and her arm thrown across it, completely concealed her face.

Tremblingly Valoria removed it. But, oh horror!—what were her sensations, when she beheld, pale and ghastly, as if already touched by the hand of Death, the features of the so much loved, so much lamented, Eugenia; whose fine black hair hung in dishevelled luxuriance around her, discoloured by the blood that flowed from a wound in her bosom? Valoria's senses seemed to forsake her at this sight. The lamp fell from her nerveless hand; and she stood motionless, and almost annihilated, when a groan from the miserable victim, recalled her to animation. She listened, afraid to trust the

evidence of her senses. It was repeated; and the idea that Eugenia still lived, that she might yet be saved, at once restored her mental and bodily strength. She eagerly looked round in search of assistance, and discovered a flask of wine standing upon the floor. With some difficulty she forced a small quantity of it down the throat of Eugenia, and binding up the wound in her bosom, to prevent the further effusion of blood, she perceived at length some faint symptoms of returning life. In a few more seconds, she slowly unclosed her eyes, and fixing them on our heroine, feebly articulated: "My Valoria, my dear girl, is it you?"

Valoria, unable to reply, could only grasp her hand and bathe it with her tears.

"Thank God!" continued the poor sufferer, after a short pause, "that has

in mercy sent my first and earliest friend, to close the eyes of the wretched Eugenia."

"Oh say not so, my beloved girl," replied the weeping Valoria: "you must yet live for those who love you."—"Never, never, Valoria," she exclaimed; "it is impossible—the blow is struck. A short, a very short period, will terminate all my sorrows. I only wish to linger in this scene of misery, till I have effaced from your mind the impression you must have received of me."

She stopped, exhausted by speaking; while Valoria, folding her to her heart, exclaimed with energy: "Say no more, my Eugenia, all is forgotten. Whatever may have been your errors, they are expiated."

"'Tis as I feared; you have been taught

to believe me guilty. Oh hear me then declare, on the faith of one who, in a few hours, will cease to breathe, that I am innocent even in the thought of any crime. I die the victim of unprincipled passion; and, Oh God! the hand of an adored husband sends me to the tomb.—I have much to tell you, my Valoria; but death forbids, and my exhausted strength prevents what I would say. The fatal night we parted I was dragged hither, and abandoned to all the horrors of my destiny, was left to my reflections. Montaldi once visited me; and from him I learnt the motives of his diabolical conduct. This last stroke completed my misery, and I invoked death as my last sad refuge."

"Monster! villain!" exclaimed the agonized Valoria: "May the curses of Heaven light upon thee!"

"Oh curse him not, Valoria," faintly returned Eugenia: "remember he is my husband, the father of my beloved Adolpho. Promise me then, as you wish for my eternal peace, never to seek revenge on Montaldi for the death of your friend. Nay, do not hesitate; for here I swear, my soul will never know repose, unless you comply with my request."

Valoria, who perceived that all the crimes Montaldi had committed against her, had been unable to eradicate his image from Eugenia's heart; and that her love was even stronger than the horrors of a death which she owed alone to him, could not refuse her the last favour she should ever bestow on her, though her heart swelled at the idea of bringing him to retribution. Gratified at Valoria's compliance, Eugenia embraced her tenderly, and enfeebled by her exertions, lay for some moments pale and exhausted.

A little wine again restored her, and clasping Valoria's hand, she exclaimed:

"The tide of life ebbs apace. A few more moments, my loved friend, and I shall be no more. Hear then my last injunctions, and as your soul hopes for salvation, follow them, so shall my last prayers be thine."

"I promise, oh! I promise every thing," returned the agitated girl; "even my life itself."

"Valoria," resumed the dying victim, "Montaldi loves you, he told me so himself; promise me then you will never be his wife."

"Sooner," exclaimed Valoria, "would I suffer every torture that can afflict humanity! Here, on my knees, by every saint and angel, I vow, no power in hea-

ven, or on earth, shall force me to wed Montaldi. To escape this hated fate, I have already endured all the horrors of imprisonment, with an unshaken resolution, and death itself shall never destroy my firmness."

"Enough, my Valoria," replied Signora Montaldi in fainter accents: "I do not doubt your integrity. Fly then, oh fly, if possible this fatal castle, this dark abode of violence and vice! Take this purse, it contains a few hundred crowns, and some jewels that I have saved from the hand of depredation. Would to Heaven I had more to bestow; but I know your heart, and am sure you will accept it as the last gift of your lost friend."

Valoria received this token of regard weeping, and securely deposited it in her bosom. Eugenia lay for some minutes

silent, then making a violent effort, she raised herself, and folding her arms around Valoria, articulated: "Bless, bless you, my dearest friend. Oh my Adolpho, my sweetest Adolpho! to what a fate do I leave you. Who will protect thy infant years, and preserve thy youth from vice and anguish? Oh God, defend my boy! Let thy blessing descend on him and my Valoria; and oh, forgive Montaldi!"

Her voice failed her, and her head sinking on the bosom of Valoria, she expired without a groan. For a long time the unhappy girl continued immovable, supporting the remains of her departed friend. Her heart throbbed with agony, but no tear fell from her burning eyes; no sigh burst from her aching bosom. Pale and inanimate almost as the breathless corpse, she sat insensible to all around her, till the first rays of morning darting

through the high casement, recalled her to a sense of her situation. She arose; and laying the remains of the poor Eugenia on the pillow, surveyed them with earnest attention. Tears, so long denied now relieved the bursting anguish of her heart; and kneeling down, she prayed devoutly for the repose of the deceased, and implored fortitude and resignation. Her mind became more composed; and the increasing light warning her to return to her own room, she arose and imprinting a fervent kiss on the bloodless lips of Eugenia, quitted the chamber of death, and with some difficulty reached her apartment, and, completely exhausted both in mind and body, retired to her bed; but the horrible event she had just witnessed, banished every idea of repose, and she lay reflecting on this distressing subject, till the door opened, and instead of her old keeper, Justina, a young girl, who had formerly attended on Signora Mon-

taldi, entered the room. Engrossed in her own reflections, Valoria scarcely noticed the change which was caused by the illness of Jacintha, when the girl advancing to the bed, inquired if she should dress her. Valoria made a motion to rise, but her head was giddy, her frame strengthless, and she sunk back again on her pillow.

"Dear Signora," cried the good natured girl, "you are surely ill; pray lay in bed a little longer, and let me get you something or other to take."

Valoria, who really felt herself too ill to rise, yielded to the advice of Justina, who she desired to procure her an opiate, as she had not slept the whole night. Justina obeyed, and Valoria, after swallowing the medicine, fell into a profound slumber; from which she had previously desired that she might not be disturbed.

The rays of the setting sun had crimsoned her curtains, before Valoria awoke; her long sleep had somewhat revived her, and flinging a robe-de-chambre over her, she left her bed, and seated herself by an open window, in hopes the fresh air would revive her. Her mind again recurred to the scenes of the preceding night; and she was lost in reflection, when she heard a step in the gallery. In the shattered state of our poor heroine's nerves, every trifle was sufficient to agitate her; and she listened in alarm as the tread approached nearer to her, when the door opened, and Montaldi entered the room. At the sight of one from whom her whole soul recoiled, in horror inexpressible, Valoria sprang from her seat, and uttering a loud shriek, darted to the opposite side of the room. Montaldi followed her; and taking her struggling hand, exclaimed:

"Am I then, Signora, so very disgust-

ing, as thus to excite your horror at my presence?"

"Oh leave me, for pity's sake leave me!" replied Valoria in a tone of anguish. "I am ill, very ill, and implore you not to extend your persecutions to the grave."

"Ill, indeed," repeated Montaldi, alarmed at the feverish flush upon her cheek, and the burning heat of her hands: "How long have you been thus; and why have you not had advice?"

Valoria, exhausted, leaned her head against a table, without replying; for, unable to support herself, she had been obliged to sit down; and Montaldi, whose fears were excited at the idea of her danger, hastily left her, to summon that assistance she appeared so much in need of. In a few moments Justina entered, accompanied by the physician of

the castle, who, after the usual inquiries, declared her disorder to be a nervous fever, for which rest and quiet would be the most effectual remedies; and having administered a composing medicine to her, he retired, leaving Justina to watch by her during the night. Long it was, notwithstanding the powers of the drug she had taken, before Valoria could sleep. Confused and horrid visions floated in her brain; and when at length the drowsy god visited her eyelids, her dreams were terrific and disturbed. The image of the dying Eugenia, murdered by the command of her husband, was ever before her. Her last accents vibrated on her ears; and she awoke in horrors indescribable. For some days Valoria continued seriously, if not dangerously ill; but youth and a good constitution, added to the skill of her physician, and the careful nursing of Justina, enabled her to surmount her disorder; and she was very

soon, though weak and languid, in a state of convalescence, to the infinite joy of Montaldi, who, terrified as he had been at the idea of for ever losing the object, to obtain whom he had plunged himself so deep in guilt, began seriously to repent his harsh conduct towards her.

CHAPTER V.

"See me, ere yet my destined course half done,
Cast forth a wanderer on a wild unknown;
See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
Each dear companion of my voyage lost."

COWPER.

As air and exercise were absolutely necessary for the recovery of Valoria's health, she was permitted to walk in the garden, accompanied by Justina, whose unremitted attention and good-nature had obtained her gratitude and esteem. As her recovery became confirmed, she was frequently obliged to submit to the hateful society of Montaldi, who continued to urge his suit with more vehemence than ever. But Valoria, to whom

he was an object of as much abhorrence as her gentle heart was capable of feeling for any one, continued firm and unshaken in her resolution; and neither his threats, his violence, nor his entreaties, had power to move her, whom the fate of Eugenia inspired with an almost supernatural fortitude, to support every misery but that of wedding her murderer.

It was after one of her frequent altercations with Montaldi on this subject, that Valoria had, as usual, retired to her chamber, the door of which was always locked upon her, and not being disposed to sleep, she seated herself by a window that looked out upon the ramparts, and beyond them commanded a vast extent of prospect. Her spirits were more than commonly depressed, and while she compared the happy past with the sad present, tears fell in torrents from her eyes. Destitute of friends and protection, al-

most of hope itself, to what could she look forward? To escape from Montaldi's power appeared nearly impossible, yet on that alone depended her every prospect of comfort.

Abandoned to these reflections, Valoria heeded not the passing time, when the clock struck eleven, and raising her eyes, she beheld a figure slowly traversing the ramparts. Surprized at so unusual an occurrence, Valoria drew back, while she continued to observe the motions of the mysterious stranger, who gradually advanced, till directly opposite her window, where he stopped, and folding his arms, stood as if absorbed in meditation.

Valoria approached near the window. The figure of the stranger seemed familiar to her; yet she was endeavouring in vain to recollect who it was, when a low voice pronounced her name.

Fearful of betraying herself into the hands of Montaldi, or some of his creatures, Valoria hesitated whether to reply or not, when the stranger exclaimed with energy, "For Heaven's sake, Signora, speak, if you are there." "Who calls?" replied Valoria, after a moment's reflection; and was instantly answered with "A friend." "What is your name?" she exclaimed, tremblingly unclosing the casement, "and what is your business with me at this unseasonable hour?"

"I am Cesario," returned the stranger, "a page belonging to the Signor Montaldi, whose principles and conduct I abhor. Long, most lovely Signora, have I witnessed the persecutions you have endured, and burnt with an ardent desire to deliver you from them. I have suspected, from circumstances, that treachery has been practised towards the Lady Eugenia, and acquainted as I am with your

aversion to the Signor, I would risk even life itself to preserve you from him."

"I thank you, my kind friend," returned Valoria, mournfully, "for the interest you seem to take in my fate; for to me, destitute of any being to sympathize in my sorrows, your anxiety cannot fail to be welcome. But alas! I fear no efforts on your part could be of service to me." "Ah, say not so, Signora Valoria," replied the page, "It depends only on yourself, to be released from the power of Montaldi, and if you will deign to confide in my honour and protection, to-morrow night shall convey you far from the castle, to whatever asylum you may think proper to name."

Valoria was lost in reflection on the safety of such a step. The known character of Cesario was such as seemed to warrant confidence in his intentions. He

had ever been distinguished for his unassuming and modest manners, as well as the general propriety of his conduct. To suppose any coalition between him and Montaldi was absurd and unlikely; for besides that Cesario had never been in his favour, she could not be more in his power than she was at present, and no situation could possibly be more dangerous to her than that in which she was now placed at the castle.

These considerations determined her, and she replied, "You cannot but think, Cesario, that my condition here is so wretched and hazardous, that I would use any means consistent with honour to escape from it; yet I should be sorry to involve any one in my misfortunes, and if there is the least probability that your generous exertions in my behalf should be discovered—"

"No, no, Signora," said the page, "there is no fear of that. Say only that you will permit me to arrange every thing for your escape."

"Can you assure me," cried Valoria, "on your word of honour, that you will incur no danger on my account?" Cesario declared that he had no apprehensions of that kind, and Valoria no longer hesitated in accepting his offers, while, with the most touching expressions of gratitude, she thanked him for the interest he took in her misfortunes.

"It is I only, Signora," replied the page, modestly, "who am obliged in the confidence you deign to shew me, nor do I wish for any other reward than the consciousness of having rescued beauty and innocence from the power of vice. If you will condescend to listen to me, Signora," he continued, "I will inform

you of the means by which your deliverance is to be effected."

Valoria bowed her head in token of acquiescence, and Cesario proceeded. "To-morrow night, Signora, at the hour of twelve, be waiting at the end of the ramparts. Every thing necessary for your departure shall be ready, and I have no doubt of our entire success. I will now, with your permission, take my leave, for the domestics are not all of them retired to rest, and I am fearful of being seen, by any one of them, from the windows."

Valoria, who was as fearful as himself of being discovered, urged his immediate departure, and extending her fair hand to him, bade him good night, in a tone of inexpressible sweetness. Cesario respectfully taking it, bowed over it, while he exclaimed, "May the Saints guard thee,

lovely lady, and sweet visions accompany thy slumbers. Rest assured of my fidelity, and remember this night is the last you will spend in the Castle de Retirero." He ceased speaking, and quitted the ramparts, and Valoria, after closing the casement, went to bed, where, according to the wishes of the young page, she enjoyed calm and uninterrupted repose.

The lark had scarce begun his matin song, the following morning, when our heroine arose. The prospect of liberty before her seemed to restore hope to her heart, and health and strength to her debilitated frame, and she began with alacrity to make such preparations as were necessary for her projected escape. To incumber herself with much baggage was impossible, and having secured all her jewels and other valuables about her, she made up a small parcel of linen, which she secreted under the bed.

Montaldi was absent from the castle the whole day, to the great joy of Valoria, who, with fond impatience, watched the sun in its journey to the western sky; and when the departing rays glistened on her chamber window, felicitated herself that it was the last time she should behold them there. Eagerly did she listen to the retiring steps of the domestics, and all was hushed in profound silence about the building, when the deep-toned clock struck the welcome hour of twelve.

Trembling with alternate hopes and fears, Valoria took up her little parcel, and cautiously unclosing the window, let herself out upon the ramparts.

The night was still and serene, and the moon, obscured by passing clouds, afforded an imperfect light. Agitated by various emotions, Valoria advanced, with

tremulous steps, to the end of the battlements, and leaning over the parapet wall, beheld a figure standing beneath it. The moon, at that moment, becoming clear, convinced her it was Cesario, and she waved her handkerchief to him as a signal. A ladder of rope was instantly thrown up, and Valoria, after securely fastening it, descended to the ground in safety. Her emotions on finding herself beyond the walls where she had suffered so much, were almost too great to be restrained, and bursting into tears, she attempted to express her gratitude to her deliverer; but Cesario placed his finger on his lips, in token of silence, and taking her arm in his, for she was unable to support herself, he conducted her slowly and cautiously under the ramparts.

They had not yet emerged from beneath them, when they perceived a door in one of the turrets unclosed, and a man appeared from within, with a torch in his

hand, which he held up, as if to give light to his companions.

Terrified at the idea of a pursuit, Valoria grasped the arm of Cesario, who, conjuring her not to be alarmed, led her to a recess in one of the buttresses, which completely concealed them from the objects of their suspicion, while it enabled them to watch their motions. In a few moments two more men came out, bearing on their shoulders a coffin, and followed by their comrade with the torch.

A deadly paleness seized Valoria's heart at this sight; she had no doubt but this was the corse of poor Eugenia, conveyed by her murderers to an unhallowed grave. Tears of agony streamed from her eyes, which still continued in earnest gaze on the ruffians, who, after winding round the ramparts, entered the wood, and were soon lost from view in its thick shades.

As soon as they disappeared, Cesario again took the hand of Valoria, to lead her forward, but overcome, almost to fainting with the emotions of her heart, she noticed him not, and sunk back, pale and almost insensible, against the wall. Alarmed at her situation, Cesario caught her in his arms, and carried her into the open air. In a few moments she sighed deeply, and burst into a flood of tears. They flowed freely; and somewhat recovered, she intreated him to proceed. Cesario obeyed, at the same time conjuring her to keep up her spirits a little longer, as two mules were waiting at a small distance, which would convey her wherever she pleased.

Valoria expressed her wish to go to the convent of St. Ursula, about three leagues from the Castle de Retirero, to which the page promised to conduct her in safety, and they again proceeded to the place

where the mules were tied. Assisted by her companion, Valoria mounted on one of the beasts, and in about two hours reached the convent, without interruption.

The loud ring of Cesario at the gate soon brought the porteress, who demanded who was there, and what was their business, at so unseasonable an hour? Valoria advanced, and in the sweetest accents of supplication, bade her inform the Lady Abbess, that a young and unfortunate female implored her shelter and protection, and taking a jewel from her pocket, desired her to present it to her, as a token of her esteem.

At the sight of the jewel the hard features of the porteress began to relax, and civilly requesting Valoria to wait a few minutes, she hastened to inform the Abbess of her mission. After a short ab-

sence, she returned with a polite invitation from the Superior to Valoria, to enter the convent, assuring her of her perfect readiness to serve her in any way she might request.

When the holy sister had delivered her message, Cesario alighted, and offered his assistance to his fair companion to dismount. His hand trembled, and leading her in silence to the abbey gate, he paused, in vissible emotion, while Valoria, in the most fervent and graceful manner, again expressed her gratitude for his services.

"Alas!" she added, "I have little else to offer you besides thanks. Nor could I think of insulting your disinterested generosity by gifts of a pecuniary nature; yet if you would accept this, drawing a valuable ring from her finger, it will still further enhance the obligations I owe

you." Cesario received it gracefully, kneeling on one knee, then taking the extended hand of the beautiful maid, he raised it to his lips, exclaiming, "Accept, most lovely, most amiable Signora, my thanks for this inestimable gift, which I will never part with but with life. Farewell," he added, in a stifled voice, "Farewell. May the blessing of Heaven descend upon you, and sometimes, in your prayers, remember Cesario."

"Farewell, Cesario," replied Valoria, "be assured of my grateful remembrance, and may the Virgin and the blessed Saints be with you."

The page bowed and mounted his mule, without answering, and Valoria, after following him with her eyes for a few minutes, accompanied the porteress into the convent. She was conducted into a parlour, where the Abbess, attended

by two of the sisterhood, was waiting to receive her. The corpulence of her figure, and the ample dimensions of her countenance, seemed silently to declare, that whatever was her vocation, abstinence and self-denial had no share in it. Her manners were, however, pleasing, and her reception of our timid heroine such as to console and encourage her; and perceiving that she was ready to sink with fatigue, she insisted that she should immediately retire to rest, a proposal which was thankfully acceded to by Valoria, who was conducted, by one of the sisters, to a small but neat chamber, where, after offering up her fervent thanks to Heaven, for her escape, to which was added a prayer for her preserver, she enjoyed that repose she stood so much in need of.

The following morning after breakfast, Valoria related her story to the Abbess,

and implored her to protect her from the power and lawless violence of Montaldi, which she most readily promised, at the same time expressing a hope, that she might find the society of St. Ursula so agreeable as to induce her to continue in it.

Valoria, who had no great inclination for a monastic life, did not appear to notice this hint, while she gracefully thanked the Abbess for her goodness, who, charmed with the beauty and elegance of her guest, seemed already to regard her with particular favour, which was attributed, by the modest girl, to the interest her misfortunes and orphan state were calculated to excite.

To one whose life had lately been a scene of terror and suffering, the calm and quiet seclusion of St. Ursula was a real blessing; and while joining the nuns in their usual occupations and amusements, Valoria experienced a degree of

happiness she had long been a stranger to. The gentleness of her disposition; and the winning sweetness of her manner, soon rendered her a favourite with the sisterhood; and even those who might have felt themselves inclined to envy her uncommon perfections, were conciliated by the unaffected humility that accompanied them.

Among the sisters of St. Ursula was one named Micheline, no less distinguished by her good sense than by her piety, which had constantly accompanied a long life of almost fifty years. The early part of it had been passed in the bustle of the world, but the loss of those she had most loved and valued, had left her, as it were, isolated in society, and she resolved to dedicate to Heaven the remainder of a life which had been spent in the praetice of virtue.

It was to this amiable woman Valoria

particularly attached herself, and found so many charms in her society, that, situated as she now was in the world, without a single friend or natural connexion, she sometimes formed an idea of passing her whole life in the same community as that which held her amiable companion, to whom she communicated her sentiments on the subject.

Flattered as sister Micheline undoubtedly felt herself, by this proof of Valoria's regard, she was very far from wishing such an event to take place; for, calculated as our lovely heroine was, to adorn the world by her charms and virtues, she could not approve of a project that would for ever doom them to wither in obscurity; and considering her present resolves as resulting from the despondency a young and sensible heart naturally feels, on finding itself, as it were, alone in the world,

she used every argument to dissuade her from her design.

Valoria was unconvinced, for she felt there was no object besides the good sister, who had any interest in her fate, but she readily promised her not to take any precipitate steps, in an affair of so much consequence, but to wait patiently, if some unexpected event did not give a new turn to her fortunes.

Valoria had been near a month in her new abode, when one evening, after a day spent in her usual occupations, she went alone to enjoy a walk in the garden. It was now the latter end of autumn, and the trees had begun to lose their foliage, which strewed the path through which she wandered. Her reflections naturally turned on the same season the preceding year, when blessed with the

protection of her adopted mother, she had passed it at d'Albano castle. The sad reverse in her destiny struck forcibly on her mind, and seating herself in an arbour, at the end of one of the walks, she gave herself up to her reflections, when a light tread near her, awoke her from her reverie, and lifting up her eyes, she beheld sister Micheline.

"Dear child," she exclaimed, "is it you? I have been looking for you this hour or more. Do you know it is nearly nine o'clock?"

"Indeed!" replied Valoria, "I had no idea that it was so late. But, my good mother, what is the matter that you seem so agitated?"

"Alas! my dear," returned the nun, "I am the messenger of bad news. You must quit the convent, for Signor Montaldi has discovered your retreat."

"Well, but my dear mother," exclaimed Valoria, after a short silence, "his power dares not to violate a sanctuary dedicated to religion, and has not the Lady Abbess promised to protect me from him."

The nun shook her head. "Listen to me, my child," said she, "and I will tell you every thing I know about it. This evening Signor Montaldi came to the convent, and desired to see the Superior; on being admitted, he declared his conviction that you had taken refuge here, and insisted upon his right, as your guardian, to claim you of her.

"The Abbess at first absolutely refused to give you up, at the same time upbraiding him with his conduct towards you. But alas! the ruling passion of this woman is an insatiable avarice, to which every consideration is secondary; and, seduced by the magnificent presents, and still more magnificent promises, of

Montaldi, she agreed to deliver you up into his hands, if it could be done without openly impeaching the sanctity of her profession. It was accordingly settled between them, that this very night, while the nuns are assembled at the midnight service, you should be decoyed by the Abbess herself into the garden, where Montaldi, assisted by some of his people, after obtaining an entrance over the wall, by means of a ladder, should surprize and carry you off. You will wonder, my dear Valoria, how a design, so inimical to your happiness, should be known to one of your most sincere friends, but accident placed me in an apartment adjoining the Abbess's parlour, from whence I heard their conversation, and as soon as Montaldi retired, I hastened to inform you of the whole affair."

Valoria flung herself into the arms of her friend, overcome by a shock so sudden and unexpected. "Lost Valoria!"

she exclaimed in agony, "what will become of thee!"

"Be composed, my dear child," cried sister Micheline, tenderly embracing her; "Do you suppose I would distress you by this intelligence, if I did not bring you a remedy likewise! This is no longer a place of safety for you. You must fly from it without delay."—"And whither can I go?" returned Valoria: "destitute as I am of every friend, of every being, to whom can I apply for protection?"

"Depend on God, my child, to raise up friends and protectors for you. All your present concern is, to think of an escape from hence. I have a key in my possession, belonging to a private door, which will secure your departure from the convent. It now wants three hours to twelve, when Montaldi is expected; and by that time you may be far beyond

the reach of his pursuit; I will take care of what you leave behind you in the monastery, and faithfully restore it, when you can reclaim it with safety."

Valoria replied, that there was nothing belonging to her in the convent, but her clothes, her jewels being in her pockets; and sister Micheline warning her there was no time to lose, she followed her down the garden, to a large court beyond; and her companion having unlocked a door in the wall, paused to give her a last embrace. Valoria flung herself on her bosom, exclaiming: "Oh my dear, my only friend! must I then part from you? Who now will take an interest in the welfare of your poor orphan? Whose tenderness will now console her aching heart?"

"Do not doubt, my sweet one," replied the good Nun; and her tears fell

on the fair face that rested on her bosom: "Do not doubt but you will meet with persons whose love will be of more value to you than sister Micheline's. But I dare not detain you here, lest we should be discovered, and all our projects ruined. Go then, my dearest child, and may God and all his holy Saints guide and defend you!"

With an overflowing heart, and eyes swimming in tears, Valoria once more embraced her venerable friend, who mingled her blessings with her adieus, till, apprehensive of danger if she any longer delayed her departure, she closed the door upon her; and Valoria found herself separated from the only being in the extensive universe who had any interest in her fate. Like our first parents,

"The world was all before her, where to choose."

And, indifferent which course she took,

Valoria pursued the road before her, till she gained the edge of an extensive waste. The night was dark and cloudy; no friendly star twinkled through the thick gloom to light the steps of the timid wanderer, and the bleak wind that whistled across the dreary heath, rudely blew about the ringlets of her luxuriant hair. Closely wrapping her veil around her delicate form, Valoria continued her way, stopping at intervals, in trembling apprehension, to listen if she was pursued. Involuntarily did her imagination recur to the happiness of former times, when, blessed with every comfort and elegance that indulgence could bestow, or riches procure, the "very winds of heaven were not allowed to visit her too roughly." Now, sad reverse! a lonely, unprotected orphan, without friends or fortune, exposed to all the changes of the blustering heavens, and to the vicissitudes of a cruel and unfeeling world.

"Oh, my mother, my dear lost mother!" exclaimed the agonized girl, "what would thy gentle bosom have felt, couldst thou have foreseen the misery of thy loved Valoria?—deprived of all—a houseless, unsheltered wanderer. Thy arms are no longer open to receive and welcome her; thy sweet accents can no more speak peace to her desponding soul. Oh, my mother!—my ever lamented Eugenia! — would to Heaven I could share thy grave, and sleep as calm and undisturbed as you do."

A small and heavy rain now began to fall, and wetted the thin garments of Valoria. Her feet every moment stuck fast in the clammy soil; and she was almost sinking with fatigue and despondency, when she perceived a light at some distance; the sight of it seemed to reanimate her fainting spirits, and determined her, if possible, to drag her exhausted limbs hither. After walking a mile fur-

ther, she entered a close lane, which led her to the extremity of a large park. The friendly light that had conducted her, shone distinctly through the trees, and Valoria soon found herself at the entrance of an elegant villa. The rain, which had somewhat abated for the last half hour, now began again with increased violence, accompanied by several claps of thunder; and after a short, but severe struggle between her timidity and distress, Valoria ran swiftly up the marble steps, and rung loudly at the portal. It was instantly opened by a domestic, who, after surveying her some moments with the most evident astonishment, civilly inquired her business. In faultering accents, she requested to be informed, who was the owner of the mansion before her. "His Excillenza the Conte Salviati," he replied. "Are any of the family now here?" inquired Valoria; and was answered that the Conte and his Lady always resided at the villa.

"Will you, then, have the goodness," she continued, "to inform them, that a young female implores a shelter and protection from the pursuit of a remorseless enemy. Oh, if their hearts ever glowed with soft emotion, at the sacred name of parent, may it excite their pity for a poor orphan, who knows no home, nor friend, nor parent!"

Affected almost to tears by the artless and touching sorrow of the fair pleader, the porter hastened to carry her pathetic message to his employers, after desiring her to shelter herself from the increasing tempest in his lodge. A thousand alternate hopes and fears agitated the bosom of Valoria in this interval; and when she again beheld the porter approaching through the hall, her feelings became so oppressive, that she was obliged to sit down, unable any longer to support her trembling frame. With a smiling air, the old man requested her to follow him,

and conducted her across the hall to an elegant saloon at the other end; and having opened the door, bowed, and left her. Valoria timidly advanced, and beheld a tall, handsome looking man, of about fifty, at whose side was seated a lady, apparently of the same age, whose person still bore the marks of striking dignity and beauty. Both of them gazed intently on Valoria as she approached; and, charming as she ever was, never had she presented an object of greater interest, than she did at that moment.

Her beautiful auburn hair, escaped from the confinement of her veil, and sprinkled with drops of rain, hung over a neck and bosom, whose whiteness might have rivalled the purest snows. Exercise and timidity had heightened the delicate rose which mingled with the lilies of her transparent complexion, and her simple mourning dress set off, to the

highest advantage, the symmetry of her faultless form. The noble strangers surveyed her with an expression of equal surprize and admiration, as they courteously motioned her to approach. Valoria obeyed, and sinking at their feet, feebly exclaimed: "In pity—" she could add no more, overcome by her emotions, and the terror and fatigue she had suffered. The most deadly paleness succeeded to the bright hue of her cheek. A mist came before her eyes; and, with a deep sigh, she fell back insensible. On recovering her faculties, she found herself extended upon a sofa. The Contessa bathing her temples, and her Lord bending over her with a look of the most lively interest.

"Where, where am I?" she exclaimed, on unclosing her languid eyes: "Save me! oh save me from Montaldi!"

"Be calm, lovely Signora," replied the

Conte: "you are safe, and with those who will not suffer any danger to approach you. Rosabella," he added, addressing his Lady; "this young creature seems sinking with fatigue and weakness. Had she not better be conveyed to a chamber? Repose will, I think, be the best restorative for her."

"Come, my dear," said the Contessa, in a tone, whose generous accents went to Valoria's heart. "Do you think you will be able to walk with my assistance. Give me your arm, and I will lead you to a bed, and procure you something that may prevent any ill effects from the wet and fatigue you have sustained."

"Ah! madam," replied Valoria, "how kind, how considerate you are! when unacquainted whether or not I am deserving of so much goodness. Suffer me, I entreat you, to explain a situation, that

must doubtless appear so strange and suspicious to you."

"Not to-night, my dear," said the considerate Contessa. "To-morrow I will listen with pleasure to your explanation; and be assured, we feel ourselves disposed to put the most favourable constructions on every circumstance we have witnessed."

Valoria bowed her thanks for this indulgence; and, supported by the arm of the Contessa, she was conducted to an elegant chamber, and assisted by her in taking off her wet garments. As soon as she was in bed, she retired; but soon returned with a goblet of warm wine, which at her earnest request, Valoria drank off, and the Contessa wishing her a good night, left her to her repose. She had scarcely awoke in the morning, when she beheld her amiable hostess by the bedside, who inquired, in the most friendly

manner how she had rested, and if she was perfectly recovered from her indisposition of the preceding night. After a suitable reply to these expressions of kindness, Valoria hastily dressed herself, and followed the Contessa to the breakfast room. An elegant young man, and a beautiful girl of fourteen, were seated on each side of the Conte, whom he introduced as his son and daughter. Both of them, with unaffected cordiality, returned the salutation of their timid guest: and Rinaldo offered her his chair, while his lovely sister drew hers to the other of Valoria; and, by a thousand little nameless attentions, sought to encourage her. Valoria was too well bred, and too much accustomed to polished society, ever to be under the influence of false shame. Her natural timidity gradually gave way before the friendly politeness of her noble entertainers, to whom she related her whole story; and concluded

by intreating their pardon for having intruded herself on their protection.

The mingled emotions of pity and indignation that affected the minds of her auditors, during her narration, were evident on their countenances, particularly that of the young Rinaldo, who could with difficulty restrain his expressions of rage against Montaldi; when Valoria having concluded, the Conte Salviati exclaimed: "Though personally unacquainted, I am no stranger to the many virtues and inestimable character of the late Contessa d'Albano. Brought up under the care and precepts of so amiable a woman, there can be no doubt but the lovely child of her adoption is worthy of such an instructress; and it gives me sincere pleasure in being able to prove my esteem for her virtues, by protecting an object so dear to her. Be assured, therefore, Signora of mine; and I am sure

I may add, the Contessa's sympathy in your misfortunes, and our determination to protect you from the villain, who has basely and unmanfully persecuted you. For the future, therefore, I flatter myself, you will consider the villa Salviati as your home, and its inhabitants as friends; who will endeavour, as much as lies in their power, to supply to you those who have been torn from you."

Overpowered by the grateful emotions of her heart, Valoria fell at the feet of the noble pair, bathed in tears of joy, and unable to articulate a single word. Raising her between them, they embraced and intreated her to be composed: and, anxious to give relief to her feelings, the Conte turned to his daughter, who had stood a silent and affected observer of this scene, and desired her to conduct Valoria into the gardens. Rinaldo eagerly arose from his chair to attend them, when his

father reminding him of his engagement to accompany him on horseback, he reseated himself with an air of disappointment, while the sprightly Serena, flinging open the glass door, gaily tripped down the marble steps, followed by her lovely companion.

The gardens were large, and finely laid out; and while visiting the various beauties they contained, Valoria gradually recovered her composure of spirits, and was enchanted with the vivacity and playful disposition of the young Serena, whose artless and repeated expressions of pleasure, at having obtained a new companion, could not fail of touching a soul, so sensible of kindness as our heroine's. After rambling for some time, they returned to the villa, and spent the remainder of the morning in accompanying the Contessa over the building, which was fitted up in the most elegant style;

and the amiable mistress took a visible pleasure in pointing out to Valoria every thing rare or beautiful which it contained. At dinner, the gentlemen again joined them, and devoted the rest of the day to the amusement of their new inmate, whose eloquent looks, though her tounge was silent, expressed a thousand unutterable sensations of gratitude for the marks of kindness she received.

We shall here pause; and, with our reader's permission, introduce them to a more intimate acquaintance with the noble family, whose generous and disinterested goodness had afforded our destitute and hapless orphan an asylum.

The Conte Salviati was descended from an ancient and illustrious family of Sicily, of which he had been the only male heir. The early part of his life had passed in the bustle of camps, and the

parade of courts; but tired at length with a gaiety which exists too often only in show, he retired from Naples, and for the last ten years had resided wholly at his villa. With the large estates and honours of his ancestors, the Conte Salviati had inherited their virtues; and his only defect was an excessive family pride. Yet, as it was united to all the qualities that can adorn social life, and had ever made him shun every mean and dishonourable action, as disgraceful to his name and quality, it might be excused in one whose character, except in this instance, was as perfect as frail mortality can boast of.

The Contessa, who resembled her lord in all his virtues, like him, too, possessed a share of hereditary pride; yet so truly sweet and affable were her manners, that it was imperceptible to all but those who, from long intimacy, had obtained a thorough knowledge of her principles. De-

voted entirely to her husband, her children, and the duties of domestic life, she was an example to those of her own rank; who, if they did not follow it, could not deny her the just tribute of respect and admiration her conduct deserved. As a mother, her tenderness was particularly striking; but Rinaldo was her favourite—the darling of her affections. To him she looked up as to one who would perpetuate the name she so much revered; and for his happiness her heart beat with more than maternal anxiety.

To a soul noble, generous and high spirited, Rinaldo united strong passions, and an impetuosity of temper that frequently led him into errors, from which his cooler judgment revolted. His feelings were ever too acute for his peace, yet there was a charm in this sensibility of disposition, which rendered his character interesting; and when to these were

added the advantages of a very handsome person, elegant manners, and a highly cultivated mind, it may easily be imagined, that his parents beheld, with equal pride and pleasure, a son, who promised to be an honour to the noble family from whence he sprung. Serena was as yet too young to have any decided character; but her beauty, her sweetness of temper, and playfulness of disposition, rendered her the idol of the whole house, even to the domestics. Such was the family among whom her capricious destiny had thrown our heroine; and who, with a delicacy peculiar to noble minds, sought, by every means, to lessen her sense of the obligations she had received from them.

In a few days Valoria was completely settled in her new abode, and every day, as she became more intimately acquainted with the characters of the Salviati family, increased her esteem and admiration for

them; and, with a heart penetrated with gratitude, she dedicated to them every moment of a life, to which their goodness had again given a charm. Her mind, no longer oppressed by terror and despondency, her fine talents, and highly cultivated understanding, were able to display themselves in all their native lustre. Serena, whose disposition was often too volatile to attend to the instructions of her masters, became anxious to emulate the accomplishments of her friend; and Rinaldo, who possessed an exquisite taste in all the fine arts, and elegant literature, was eager to give the last finish to a genius naturally so perfect as Valoria's. The winter passed swiftly, in a succession of useful studies, and agreeable amusements; and the spring, which in Sicily is very early, brought with it new pleasures for the family at the villa. Part of the day was dedicated to excursions in the neighbouring country, or delightful

rambles on the sea shore, which bounded one side of the Conte's domains. Rinaldo was their constant companion, and when wandering, with his sister leaning on one arm, and Valoria on the other, he frequently declared himsef so happy, that any change in his situation, even if he could possess a kingdom, would be rejected by him with disdain.

Often when the playful Serena broke from his arm, in search of shells and sea weed, he would climb, with Valoria, some of the grotesque rocks with which the shore abounded; and seated by her, on some projecting crag, while one arm supported her on her airy station, would point out to her observation the beautiful prospects that presented themselves on every side, or listen to the soft tones of her enchanting voice, as she "woke the echos with her artless song."

Valoria had never been acquainted

with any gentleman but Montaldi, who she had detested, and the young Orsino. Rinaldo Salviati was, in every respect, the superior of them both; and though she could not but be sensible of the defect in his temper, yet she saw so much to admire in his really very amiable character, that she felt for him a sincere esteem and regard. But her sentiments towards him were purely fraternal; they were unembittered by any painful emotion; and were all centered in a wish, that Heaven had bestowed on her such a brother. Far different were the sensations that filled the breast of the impetuous Rinaldo. From the first moment he beheld Valoria, he thought her the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. Her romantic story, her misfortunes, her orphan and destitute condition, all conspired to awaken an interest in a mind so ardent, so enthusiastic, as Rinaldo's. But when, on a more intimate acquaint-

ance, he found that her form, all charming as it was, enshrined a mind still more lovely; when he saw, that to manners the most artless and unassuming, she united all the talents the most finished education could bestow; Rinaldo's heart was irrevocably gone, and he felt for Valoria, all the ardour of a first and violent passion: while the innocent girl, unconscious of the power of her charms, or the sentiments of Rinaldo, felt an artless satisfaction in the idea of sharing with Serena the affection of him and his parents.

It was one evening in the beginning of May, that Valoria accompanied only by a favourite spaniel, presented to her by the Contessa, took a ramble on the sea shore. The day had been unusually sultry; and though the heat was somewhat abated, it was still so oppressive, as to render walking unpleasant, and she accordingly directed her steps to a retreat,

where, with her young companions, she had passed some of her happiest hours since her arrival at the villa. It was an excavation in the rock, the entrance of which had been overshadowed by Rinaldo with jessamine and passion-flowers, which shaded it from the fervors of the mid-day sun; and diffused a delicious fragrance around. The inside of the cell was ornamented with moss, shells, and sea weed; a couch composed of rushes served for a seat, and the floor strewed with the same, completed the decorations of the hermitage, for so it had been called by its lovely inmate, who now seating herself on the short turf, beneath the fragrant foliage, surveyed the wide expanse of ocean before her, with those emotions of awful pleasure this sublime object always inspired. A volume of Metastasio, alternately engaged her attention, till the soft hues of twilight stole gradually over every object, and Valoria was rising to

would think you were mad."—"I am mad!" he exclaimed: "and it is you alone who can restore me to my reason. Hear me, Valoria," he added, falling on his knees," or let me die at your feet. I love you; it is not in the power of language to express how much; but my happiness, my life itself depends on your being mine. From the first moment we met, my whole heart has been yours; but it was not till this last week I knew how much I adored you, when the anguish I suffered at your absence, convinced me I could not exist without you."

"Rinaldo!" exclaimed Valoria, bursting into tears; "is this from you! Can you, oh can you mean to insult me!"—"Insult you!" returned the impetuous youth, folding his arms passionately around her: "I would die sooner. I vow to Heaven my designs are honourable."

"And do you think," replied Valoria, "that your noble parents will ever consent to your union with one destitute of birth and fortune; with a dependant on their bounty."—"They must, they shall consent," exclaimed Rinaldo. "Have I not a right to make that choice which is most coducive to my own happiness; I have, and am determined to be the master of my own actions. Say only, my adored Valoria, that I may hope for your affections, and every other obstacle will be easily surmounted."

"Be assured, Rinaldo," replied Valoria firmly, "that I will never listen to your addresses, without the sanction of your noble parents, to whom I owe a thousand obligations. And shall I, in return for all their favours, seduce their only, their darling son, from the duty which he owes to them? No, never; I should be an ungrateful wretch, unworthy

of their goodness, and a disgrace to society, if I were capable of such an action."—"Cold, insensible Valoria!" cried Rinaldo; "Could you reason thus calmly, if you felt like me? Ah, no! Your soul conceives not the agonies that torture mine; but be it so. Hate, detest me as you will, my heart shall adore you till the last moment of my existence, which will not in that case, be long; for live I cannot, deprived of you."

"Why do you talk thus wildly?" replied Valoria, alarmed at his words, and his manner of uttering them. "Wherefore should I hate and detest one from whom I have received every mark of kindness and attention?—No; believe me, I am incapable of such ingratitude. On the contrary, your happiness is dearer to me than my own; and it is on that account I lament the fatal prepossession you have conceived for me."

The soothing tones and gentle manner of Valoria had an instantaneous effect in calming the fiery passion of Rinaldo, who now implored her to forgive his impetuosity. "I cannot forgive you," returned Valoria, in accents of pity and softness; "for you have only grieved, not offended me. But let us think no more about it, and oblige me by returning home immediately."—"Oblige you, Valoria!" exclaimed Rinaldo; "what would I not do to oblige *you?* Ah! it is in your power to make me what you please. You alone can correct my foibles, and render me worthy such a being as yourself."

"Well," replied she, half smiling, "time will show how you profit by my endeavours;" and placing her arm in his, they proceeded to the villa. An uninterrupted silence continued, till they ascended the steps, when Rinaldo exclaimed:

"Valoria, will you make me one promise?"

"What is it, Signor Rinaldo?"

"That you will not inform any one of this conversation. Nay do not refuse me," he added, perceiving she hesitated; "I am already sufficiently miserable, without any addition to my wretchedness."

"Well," she replied, after a momentary silence, "I consent; but on one condition, that it is the last conversation we ever have on this subject; and, as a friend whose happiness I value, let me implore you to look upon Valoria, in future, in no other light than as your adopted sister, and the orphan dependant of your noble and generous parents."

The opening of the door prevented Ri-

naldo's reply, and they both entered the saloon, where they found the Conte and his lady in much anxiety at the long absence of Valoria, who apologized for it by saying, that the beauty of the evening had tempted her to stray longer than usual, and the subject was accordingly dropped.

Resolved to admit of no opportunity for renewing a conversation, that every principle of honour and gratitude forbade her to listen to, Valoria avoided every occasion of being alone with Rinaldo, while, at the same time, unwilling to pain a mind so irritable, she carefully shunned all appearance of design; so that however grieved he might feel himself, it was impossible for him, with any reason, to complain of her conduct.

Some weeks had passed, and nothing further had occurred on that subject: when one morning, as Valoria was sitting

alone in her chamber, the Contessa suddenly entered. An unusual gloom loured upon her brow, and she replied to the respectful salute of Valoria by coldly desiring her to be seated. Tears sprung to the eyes of the timid orphan, as raising them to the Contessa's face, she faintly inquired if she had offended her?

"Ask your own heart, ungrateful girl," she replied, "whether it cannot answer that question."

"That heart tells me, madam," said Valoria, "that I have never, even in thought, deviated from the grateful duty I owe you. Nor am I conscious of having, in the smallest degree, merited your displeasure."

"Do you consider it as nothing, then," returned the Contessa with severity, "to have ensnared the affections of an only

son, and seduced him from his duty; to have destroyed all the prospects his family had entertained of his forming a splendid and honourable alliance: and bringing dissention and sorrow into the bosoms of those, from whom you have experienced the most unlimited kindness."

The soul of Valoria rose superior to accusation her conscience told her she did not deserve, and she replied with dignity, "I have never, madam, ensnared the affections of Signor Rinaldo, or sought to seduce him from his duty. It is true, I am acquainted with his unfortunate partiality to me; but I know my own situation too well to aspire to the son of the noble house of Salviati, and never gave him the least encouragement to suppose I ever should do so." She then proceeded to relate her conversation with Rinaldo at the hermitage, and concluded by referring the Contessa to her son, to confirm the truth of her assertions.

"Enough, my dear girl!" exclaimed that lady, at the same time tenderly embracing her; "I am perfectly satisfied with your conduct. It is such as increases the high esteem I have always entertained for your character and principles. Forgive me, that I could, for a moment, doubt them; but, indeed, I was at that moment so hurt and agitated, I was scarcely conscious of what I said. It has long," she added, "been the intention of the Conte, to unite our son with his cousin, the heiress of the Alveroni family, whose beauties and virtues render her conspicuous among the most celebrated of the Neapolitan fair. The union is equally desired by the Marchese, my brother, and we only waited the period of Rinaldo's majority, to conclude an alliance that will unite the names and fortunes of two illustrious houses. To-day for the first time, my Lord acquainted our son with his intention in his favour, when, instead of accepting with gratitude a proposal

that confers so much honour on him, he declared to his father the impossibility of his ever receiving the hand of the lovely Octavia, and proceeded to avow his love for you, and his determination never to unite himself to another. You may imagine, Valoria, our sensations at this unexpected declaration. The Conte upbraided his son in the severest terms; Rinaldo retaliated; and, unable to be any longer a witness of this scene of altercation, I left the apartment, and regarding you (as I then did) as the guilty cause of it, you cannot wonder my feelings should, at such a moment, get the better of my cooler reason."

"Say no more, my dearest madam, I beseech you," returned Valoria. "No punishment could have been sufficiently severe, had I been the ungrateful creature, appearances seemed to indicate."

At that moment, the Conte entered the room.—"Well, Madam!" he exclaimed.

"Well, my Lord." This lovely girl is what I always supposed her to be—an honour to the noble family that fostered her."

"I know it, Madam," returned the Conte; "my son has fully exculpated her from every species of blame; and I am convinced her conduct has been equally delicate and honourable. Yet Rinaldo continues immovable in his determination to reject the hand of his cousin, though my solemn promise is pledged to the Marchese. The intimate friendship that has so long subsisted between our families must all be the sacrifice of his obstinacy and infatuation." Valoria burst into tears, and clasping her hands together, exclaimed:

"Wretch that I am! I am doomed to

bring sorrow on all those who are dear to me, or who interest themselves in my fate. Had I never been an inmate in their hospitable mansion, the Signor Rinaldo had never disputed the will of his noble parents. Oh! that I had perished, a prey to the inclement elements, rather than have been preserved, to bring sorrow and dissension among those whose goodness saved, protected, and cherished me! Oh, my Lord!" she added, falling at the Conte's feet: "send me immediately from your house, where I am the unhappy cause of distress to my revered benefactors. Consign me to that poverty and obscurity my destiny has decreed for me; where, unknown and unremembered, the hapless Valoria will no longer be an obstacle to your peace."

"No, my amiable young friend," replied the Conte, raising her; "I have vowed to protect you, and the infatuation

of my son shall not make me recede from my word. I trust to the influence you possess over his mind, to induce him to yield to our wishes: for, though deaf to honour and duty, he may, perhaps, listen to the voice of love."

Dinner was now announced, but Rinaldo did not make his appearance. The meal passed in gloomy and unsocial silence; and as soon as the cloth was withdrawn, Valoria retired from table, to indulge in solitude the uneasy reflections that obtruded upon her mind. Pensive, and lost in thought, she continued to traverse the gardens, till reaching a summer-house, she entered it, and at the same moment beheld Rinaldo, who, unperceived had followed her hither, and who now approached her with quick and unequal steps. His looks were pale and agitated, and, flinging himself on a seat, he exclaimed with vehemence:

"Cruel, cruel Valoria! what have you done?"

"Nothing to give you any uneasiness, I am sure," she returned, in accents of surprize.

"Have you not," continued Rinaldo, "renounced me for ever?" Have you not united with my family to destroy my peace, my every hope of happiness? and yet you term this nothing?"

"Rinaldo," returned Valoria with gentleness, "I have never wished to distress you; but every principle of honour, of gratitude, and of virtue, forbid my listening to a passion, unsanctioned by the approbation of your noble parents."

"And why will they not consent!" exclaimed Rinaldo. "Is not Valoria worthy to adorn a monarch's throne,

possessed as she is of every charm to fascinate, every virtue to insure respect? One obstacle alone opposes my happiness. A ridiculous and unreasonable pride renders my haughty friends insensible to every perfection; and for the gratification of an empty ambition, they unrelentingly sacrifice the future peace of their only son, who never, but in this instance, when the comfort of his whole life is concerned, has ever disputed their will."

Valoria could not but allow the justness of this reasoning; but situated as she was, it was impossible for her to express such sentiments to Rinaldo, and she accordingly remained silent.

After a short pause, during which he appeared much agitated, the young Salviati arose, and flinging himself at her feet, exclaimed:

"Oh Voloria! beloved Valoria! do not abandon me to a fate my heart tells me I cannot support—the insupportable wretchedness of losing you. There is yet one way to avoid it. Be mine, irrevocably mine.—Fly with me this very night from the villa, and by a private marriage put it out of the power of destiny to divide us. However exasperated they may at first be, yet when they find there is no remedy, my parents will, I am sure, forgive their son, whose only crime is a passion that reason and virtue equally approve; and even should they continue inexorable in their displeasure, a moderate yet handsome fortune, left me by a doating grandfather, renders me independent of them; and in a delightful retreat I possess on the banks of the Arno, we may enjoy all the happiness that love and virtue can bestow. Oh, Valoria! do not, do not hesitate to bless the man whose whole life will be too

short to express his ardent love, his never-ceasing gratitude!"

"Never," she replied with firmness, "never, Signor, can I consent to your proposal. Even were I not bound by the most sacred ties of gratitude and honour to the Conte and your mother, I would never enter clandestinely into any family, to become the object of their scorn and hatred. No, Rinaldo; however despised I may be for my want of birth, the soul of Valoria possesses a nobility independent of illustrious ancestry, or high-sounding titles, that will never suffer her to commit a mean or dishonourable action."

With all the eloquence that passion could inspire, Rinaldo continued to urge his suit, but Valoria was inexorable; and despairing at last of shaking her resolution, he started from his knee, and rushed from her, exclaiming wildly:

"My destiny is then decided, since nothing can alter your determination. Farewel, cruel, insensible Valoria; you may perhaps repent your inflexibility; and you, too, inexorable parents, will mourn too late, when you behold your only son consigned to an early tomb, the victim of your ambition!"

The tone of gloomy despair in which he spoke alarmed Valoria, and following him down the steps of the summer-house, she laid her hand on his arm, and intreated him not to go. "For what purpose should I stay," he replied, at the same time suffering her to lead him back, since you refuse to hear me?"

Valoria made no reply, but burst into a flood of tears, which seemed to have an almost magical effect on the feelings of the impetuous Rinaldo, who, falling on his knees, exclaimed, in faultering

accents: "Oh, Valoria! forgive me if I have distressed you. But indeed, indeed my heart!"—He could add no more, his tears fell fast on the pale cheek that rested on his shoulder, and his sobs were audible. A few moments overcame Valoria's involuntary emotion, and she gently disengaged herself from Rinaldo's hold, who again implored her to forgive him. "I do most readily," she replied, raising him from his suppliant posture. "But if you do indeed value my happiness, do not again agonize my heart, as you have done to-night!" Rinaldo sighed heavily without replying, and drawing her arm through his, slowly returned to the house, when he immediately retired to his own chamber, to endeavour to recover his composure, before he joined the family in the supper-room.

Valoria, whose heart, without participating in his sentiments, bled at the an-

guish they inflicted, and which was legibly pourtrayed in his countenance, was really unhappy in being the innocent cause of his wretchedness; and silent and spiritless, she gladly took advantage of a violent head-ache to retire early to her chamber, where, unobserved, she might weep over her own destiny, and that of an amiable young man, who, but for her, had most probably never been an object of pity.

CHAPTER VI.

Farewell; I think on you, and weep,
Not for the many joys I leave behind,
But that my feet have trod thy paths, I mourn.

Several days elapsed, and Rinaldo did not renew the conversation he last had with Valoria. A deep and heavy gloom seemed to pervade his mind, which he gave himself up to, without any effort to conquer; and neither the efforts of his family, nor the visible unhappiness it inflicted on her he loved, had any power to rouze him from this lethargy of despair. Shut up continually in the solitude of his own chamber, or wandering alone in the most unfrequented paths, he passed the day; and often, in the stillness of night, did Valoria from her window

perceive his figure slowly traversing the garden, or fixed in melancholy contemplation beneath her casement.

Though almost distracted at this change of their darling son, his parents continued inflexible in their opposition to his wishes. The cheerfulness that had formerly reigned in the villa Salviati was fled, and even the lively Serena, though but partially acquainted with the cause, was no longer gay, when she beheld sadness overcloud the brows of her parents, her brother secluded from her society, and her favorite Valoria dejected, and frequently in tears. None perhaps of the whole family felt more acutely than our heroine, the change that had taken place in it.

However innocently, Valoria could not but consider herself as the cause of this sad change, and the mournful looks of the Contessa, as she followed with her

eyes the motions of her son, the sighs of his father, and above all the wretchedness depictured in the countenance of Rinaldo, wrung her heart with intolerable anguish; and a thousand times she regretted that she had not perished on the night of her escape from the convent, rather than have lived to be a cause of misery to those whose benevolence had preserved her from destruction.

One afternoon, as Valoria was walking alone in the garden, indulging these reflections, she suddenly found herself at the summer-house, where she had conversed with Rinaldo a short time before. The door yielded to her hand, and on entering she beheld him extended on a sofa. A livid paleness had succeeded to the naturally animated hue of his complexion; his eyes, dim, and without expression, were fixed upon the ground, and one hand rested on a pair of pistols which

lay on a table by his side. Petrified with amazement, Valoria stood for some moments motionless, when Rinaldo rising advanced towards her, and taking her hand, led her to the sofa, then seating himself beside her, he remained in earnest gaze on her face, from which alarm and uneasiness had chased the roses. A long silence ensued, when gently disengaging her's from the burning hand of Rinaldo, she inquired, in an accent of tenderness, if he was unwell?—A mournful smile passed over his features, and putting his hand to his breast, he exclaimed, "It is here, Valoria, my complaint lies; it pains me terribly; but it will soon end." His voice faultered, tears rushed from his eyes, but dashing them hastily away, he added, in a firmer tone—"Valoria, I can no longer deceive you. It is my fixed determination never to survive your loss."

"For the love of Heaven! Rinaldo,"

returned the trembling girl, gasping for breath, "what does all this mean?"

"It means," replied Rinaldo, in a hollow sepulchral tone, "that *I must die.*"

Shuddering and pale, Valoria was unable to reply; a kind of annihilation seemed to steal over all her faculties, and she sat motionless, with her eyes fixed on the wild and haggard countenance of Rinaldo, while the tears that stole down her colourless cheeks, alone testified her existence.

"You weep, my Valoria," he exclaimed with tenderness; "would I could shed tears too: but I have wept my brain away—feel how it burns," and he pressed her cold damp hands to his throbbing temples. A long silence succeeded, when, relinquishing his hold, Rinaldo advanced to the door, and locked it; then taking

one of the pistols from the table, he again approached Valoria, who with a motion of terror sprung from her seat, and attempted to pass him.

"Fear not, my beloved," he exclaimed: "I will not injure you—One last embrace, and then farewell for ever," he added, folding her passionately in his arms —then suddenly sinking on his knees, he articulated in broken and suppressed tones—"Adieu, most lovely, most adored of human beings!—Forgive, pity, and sometimes remember Rinaldo."

Already the fatal instrument of death was raised to his head—his hand touched the trigger—it missed fire, and only slightly grazed his forehead;—when Valoria, whose fleeting senses seemed in some measure to be recalled by the report, rushed before him, and seizing the other pistol, made towards the door.—

Rinaldo followed her, and attempted to wrench it from her hand, but desperation gave her supernatural strength to retain it—when, in the struggle, it went off, and the whole contents were lodged in Valoria's arm, who instantly fell to the ground, bathed in blood, and apparently without life.

For some moments Rinaldo stood motionless by the side of his lovely victim. The idea that she was for ever gone, though it seemed to restore his wandering reason, was too agonizing to be endured, and he sunk senseless by her side.

In the mean time, the Conte, who had been sitting alone in the library, was alarmed by the report of the pistols, and immediately rushed into the gardens, from whence the sound proceeded. Chance directed his steps to the summer-house—the door being fastened, augmented his

apprehensions, and with a desperate effort, he burst it open, at the same moment that Rinaldo, recovered from his fainting fit, was slowly arising from the ground.

The Conte advanced, and in a voice of thunder demanded of his son the meaning of the scene before him. Rinaldo faultered out an almost inarticulate explanation. "I have murdered her," he continued; but think not that I will survive her."

"Silence, Sir," exclaimed the Conte sternly, "and assist me in conveying the victim of your ungovernable passions from this place. For your sake I hope she may recover: since your future life must otherwise be a scene of unavailing remorse."

Convinced, from his manner, that his father was extremely displeased, Rinaldo

did not venture a reply; and though staggering under his precious burthen, assisted the Conte in carrying the apparently lifeless Valoria into the house; and having laid her on a sofa, the latter hastened to inform his lady of what had occurred.—Every remedy was speedily applied for her restoration, and after some time, she unclosed her eyes, and in a feeble voice inquired for Rinaldo, who in a moment was at her feet, and grasped her cold and trembling hand in his.

"Oh, thank God!" she added, "he is safe!—I have saved him," and again relapsed into insensibility.

By order of a surgeon who had been sent for, and now made his appearance, Valoria was conveyed to her chamber, where he examined her wound, and after extracting the ball, pronounced it not dangerous, and that a few days would

probably restore her to health. The joy of Rinaldo at this intelligence was as extravagant as his grief had been before at the idea of her danger; and kneeling by her side, Valoria extorted from him a solemn promise, never again, for her sake, to attempt his existence; and so forcible were her arguments, so eloquent her appeals to the heart and feelings of Rinaldo, that, ashamed of his conduct, he vowed for the future to endeavour to controul the impetuosity of his temper, which had nearly led to a catastrophe which he now shuddered to recollect.

In a few days, according to her surgeon's prediction, Valoria was sufficiently recovered to quit her chamber, to the great satisfaction of the whole family, who considering her as the preserver of their darling hope, looked upon her with augmented tenderness. Yet so unconquerable was the prejudice that influenced

them, that neither a thorough conviction of the excessive passion of their son, nor the obligation they owed to her, could induce them to consent to his union with Valoria; while their anxiety to promote one with his cousin increased daily.

One morning, when alone with the Contessa and his son, the Conte again introduced the subject, and concluded by desiring Rinaldo to prepare himself for a journey to Naples, to pay his respects to the Marchese di Alveroni, "who" added he, "has for some time been in expectation of seeing you."

"My Lord," replied Rinaldo, in a respectful, yet firm tone: "in every instance but this you shall find me entirely submissive to your commands; but I never will be so mean and despicable a hypocrite, as to offer to the Lady Octavia a hand and heart which is plighted to ano-

ther. As my cousin, my Lord; as the daughter of my respected uncle, I should visit her with pleasure; as my affianced wife, never.—Valoria alone has my heart and my vows, and if she is not mine, I will never marry another."

"Degenerate boy!" exclaimed the Conte, "can nothing then induce you to relinquish this debasing passion?"

"A passion, my Lord," returned Rinaldo, "founded on virtue, and sanctioned by reason and honour, cannot be debasing. Was Valoria the acknowledged offspring of low born, or infamous parents, I should not dare to solicit your approbation of my choice; but her birth, though mysterious and doubtful, may yet be honourable, and perhaps as noble as my own; and even the most prejudiced must allow, that she would adorn the most elevated station with her charms and virtue."

"I do not deny," replied his father, "that she is both lovely and amiable. But shall the house of Salviati descend to an alliance with an unknown orphan, without a name or family? No! sooner would I behold my last hope laid in the tomb, than consent to such a degradation, or falsify my word pledged to the Marchese di Alveroni. Awake, then, Rinaldo, from this infatuation. Ratify the engagements I have formed for you, and by a union with the fair Octavia, preserve your father's plighted promise, and confirm the wishes of your family."

"Impossible! my lord," exclaimed Rinaldo, "I cannot be so very a villain as to vow love where my heart disdains the sentiment. I will not marry without your consent, but never shall I be the husband of Octavian."

"Enough, Signor," returned the Conte,

"you may perhaps repent your obstinacy, when it has deprived this idolized Valoria, this object of your adoration, of the asylum she now enjoys; since I cannot possibly allow of your residence beneath the same roof, when my indulgence only excites your rebellious opposition to my commands. I have too great a confidence in the principles of Valoria, to fear that she will ever hold any clandestine correspondence with you, when removed from your society; and could I suspect the contrary, a convent's walls should for ever inclose the obstacle to the felicity and honour of your family."

"No, my Lord!" exclaimed Rinaldo with energy, "I will never deprive the sweet persecuted girl of the asylum your goodness has afforded her: myself will quit the villa; and when removed at a distance from the object of my love, you

will no longer have any reason to withhold your benevolence from her."

"Very well, Sir," said the Conte, "be it so; every thing shall be ordered for your departure, and let me never see you again, till you can return with a resolution to obey my commands, and to act worthy of my son, and the heir of Salviati."

The Contessa, who, till this moment, had been silent, now burst into tears, and implored her lord to revoke this severe sentence.

"On one condition only, Madam," returned the Conte. "Let my son immediately set out for Naples, and offer his addresses to his cousin Octavia. This is my irrevocable determination; and you now, Sir, have only to obey."

Without waiting for an answer, the Conte quitted the room; and Rinaldo, falling at his mother's feet, implored her to be comforted, and sought by every argument to reconcile her to his departure. The Contessa was inconsolable; when, tired at length by her grief and reproaches, he left her to make the necessary preparations for his journey; which, while it afflicted him from the prospect of a long separation from Valoria, yet presented to him a consolation in the idea, that for her sake he became an exile. Rinaldo had scarcely quitted the room, when our heroine entered, and beholding the Contessa in tears, flew to her, and in the most tender and respectful manner, inquired the cause of her distress.

"It is not in your power, Madam," she replied, "to alleviate my sorrows. A son banished from his paternal home, the victim of an ill-placed passion, does not ad-

mit of any consolation." She then quitted the room. Severely hurt at this harsh reproof, Valoria withdrew to a window to conceal her tears, when the Conte, who had entered unperceived, approached her, and in a tone of kindness, asked her why she wept? "Oh, it is nothing, my Lord," she replied, at the same time dashing away the tears, that hung like dew drops on the bosom of a rose.

"Pardon me, Valoria," replied the Conte, "if I do not credit you. It is not usual to weep without a cause, and if I have heard aright, I do not wonder that you do so; but be consoled. The Contessa is at present afflicted at the departure of her son, but I know her too well, to fear she will long have the injustice to be offended with you, for an event of which you are innocent." The Conte then proceeded to inform Valoria of the conversation he had had with Rinaldo,

and of the necessity there was for his leaving the villa; absence and change of scene being the most probable means of curing him of a passion, that every consideration called upon him to subdue.

Valoria listened to the Conte with the most profound attention, and when he ceased speaking, addressed him in a firm and serious tone. "Hear me, my Lord, I conjure you. Too long have I been the cause of sorrow to my generous benefactors. Oh! spare me then the additional grief of knowing I have banished your noble son from his home, and inflicted a new pang on the heart of the revered Contessa.—Let me, I implore you, quit the mansion where your goodness has so long afforded me a shelter. On my knees" and she sunk at his feet, "I solicit my removal, as the only means of expiating my involuntary crime, and restoring the lost peace of your family which I have destroyed."

"Valoria," replied the Conte, after a long silence, "I am fully sensible of the generosity and exalted principles that prompt you to make this request, but I cannot consent to it. My word and honour are pledged to protect you, while your conduct is worthy of it: they have never yet been forfeited in any instance, and in this I shall certainly hold them sacred. My son's destiny is in his own hands. It is in his power, at any time, by a compliance with my commands, to return home; till then, his absence will be more agreeable both to himself and me. I beg, therefore, Valoria, that you will drop the subject, and I will answer for the Contessa's conduct towards you, while you continue at the villa."

Awed by the unusual sternness of his manner, Valoria did not venture a reply, and soon after his departure she was joined by Rinaldo, who, perceiving the

traces of tears on her lovely cheek, tenderly inquired why she wept? "Can you wonder at my doing so," returned Valoria in a melancholy accent, "when I consider myself as the cause of misery to those I love?"

"And may I flatter myself, that I am included under that appellation?" exclaimed Rinaldo with vivacity.

"Undoubtedly," replied the artless girl. "It is natural to love those from whom we receive kindness, and I shall always look upon the Signor Rinaldo with the regard due to a brother."

The name of brother sounds but harshly in the ears of a passionate admirer. Rinaldo felt the truth of this sentiment, and after a moment's silence, exclaimed! "and under that title, Valoria, may I hope to be honoured by your remembrance. Will

not some happier being, some more favoured lover, soon efface from your mind all recollection of Rinaldo?"

"My dear friend," replied Valoria in a serious tone, "an orphan of doubtful birth, and destitute of fortune, is not likely to attract many suitors; and even were I to be addressed by one whose independent situation, rendered him the uncontroled master of his choice, believe me, no consideration of interest will ever induce me to bestow my hand, if my heart and affections cannot accompany it."

Rinaldo, though very unsatisfied, was obliged to be content with this assurance. Blinded as he was by the infatuation of love, he had long apprehended, that as a lover, he was indifferent to Valoria. Many circumstances had occurred to confirm him in this idea, and though his

heart was agonized at the conviction, he could not resolve to relinquish his hopes of a union with the object of his ardent affections, notwithstanding the increasing obstacles that opposed it. The idea of seeing her wedded to another, tortured him with insupportable anguish; an anguish he knew not how to conceal, and which he hesitated to express in her presence; well assured, that he could have no right to demand constancy from one whose heart he had never possessed.

A summons to dinner interrupted a conversation that was now become painful to both parties, and they immediately descended to the dining-room. The meal was almost passed in silence, and during the remainder of the day, the manners of the Contessa towards Valoria, were polite, but cold, and the look of anguish with which she frequently regarded her son, inflicted the most acute pain on our he-

roine's heart; depressed in spirits, and unable any longer to witness the sorrow of those she loved, and of which she was herself the cause, she retired early, and in the solitude of her own chamber gave herself up to the reflections her situation naturally inspired. "Alas!" she exclaimed, "I am surely destined to be the most unfortunate of human beings, since I even entail misery on those whose benevolence is the source of all my comforts. —But for me Rinaldo had never been banished from his paternal home, nor had the Contessa's heart been wrung with anguish for the fate of her darling.—Oh how, when is he gone, shall I support her sorrow; how bear, after being so tenderly regarded, to become the object of her hatred! Will not every reproachful look, every tear she sheds, be a dagger to my heart?—Oh, no, I cannot support it.—— Poverty, obscurity, all are preferable to a life like that."

While thus lamenting her destiny, Valoria eagerly sought, in her own mind, the means of averting the evils she foresaw. One plan alone presented itself: a removal from the villa would at once supersede the necessity of Rinaldo's departure, and preserve his fond mother from the affliction which, of all others, she was least calculated to bear, the loss of her son. It was true that, from a notion of honour, the Conte had opposed her desire of quitting his family; but yet Valoria thought he would not be sorry if any circumstance should occur, to remove from it an object who had been the cause of so much uneasiness. A voluntary departure would at once put an end to all their embarrrasments on her account, and acquit her of the obligations she owed them.

"Yes," cried Valoria, while a glow of animation overspread her countenance: "Yes, I will fly from this beloved asy-

lum, and by my absence restore peace to my noble benefactors. Painful as the sacrifice is, gratitude and duty demand it from me; and when far removed from their protection, they will then, perhaps, think with pity and tenderness on the unfortunate Valoria."

Resolved upon the step she should take, her next consideration was the means by which it was to be effected, and this was a question not easily to be resolved, since destitute as she was of friends, and every relative, on whose kindness she might have a claim; to whom could she apply for protection. After a long deliberation, she determined at length to go to Naples, and implore the advice of Signor Corvino, the physician of the late Contessa d'Albano. Her expenses since her arrival at the villa had been so trifling, that she had still almost all the money she had brought with her; and this, added to what she might

obtain from the sale of her jewels, would secure her admission into a convent, or support her in some private family, till she should meet with a situation, in which she might be indebted to her own talents for a subsistence. Her next consideration was the manner in which she was to leave the villa, a point of no less difficulty than the former; and it was not till after repeated reflections, that she remembered a fisherman who resided on the opposite shore, and who carried on a trade of fish, and other commodities, with the villages on that part of the Sicilian coast, and who she doubted not, by the promise of a handsome recompence, would engage to convey her to the kingdom of Naples. To him, therefore, she determined to apply the following morning; and having thus resolved upon her future conduct, she retired to bed, and soon fell into a tranquil slumber.

At the first dawn of day Valoria left her couch, and hastily slipping on her clothes, quitted the house, and directed her steps to the sea-shore, in order to obtain an interview with Jacomo. In a few moments she beheld the fisherman and his boy busied in hauling up his boat. On her stopping within a few paces of them, they regarded her with an air of surprize, and saluted her in a blunt, yet courteous manner. Valoria entered into conversation with them, and on hearing that they returned to Naples the next morning very early, inquired if Jacomo would undertake to convey her thither; for which she promised him an ample reward. To this proposal the fisherman readily agreed; and Valoria, after extorting from him a vow of secrecy, and appointing a place for him to wait for her the ensuing morning, returned to the villa, highly satisfied with the success of her errand, and with the arrangements she had formed for the future.

The consciousness of having performed her duty, and a proud delight which she felt from the idea of restoring the peace of her noble friends, diffused an air of unusual satisfaction over Valoria's features during the day, and though an unbidden tear sometimes started to her eye, she instantly checked it, and resumed an air of serenity.

In the evening, accompanied by Rinaldo and his sister, she walked to the hermitage on the sea-shore. A more than common depression hung over the spirits of the former; and, willing to give a new turn to his ideas, Valoria took up her harp, and ran over a sweet and plaintive prelude to an air he was particluarly partial to. Rinaldo started from the reverie in which he had been plunged, and turning hastily to her, exclaimed:

"Valoria, will you sing me that song? It is, perhaps, the last time I may ever hear it from you."

The last, indeed, thought she, with an emotion of tenderness and regret—and in a voice whose tones were modulated to the most exquisite melody, she began the following air:

SONG.

Ah! happy woods, sweet beechen shade,
Where oft at early morn I've stray'd,
Where oft I've hail'd the closing day,
And heard the woodlark's evening lay:
Still shine thy beauties to the morn,
Still Sol's last rays thy boughs adorn;
Thy songsters warble from the tree,
But, ah! these charms are lost on me!

"The sinking form of pale Despair,"
I seek thy shades to nourish care,
The silent tear unseen to shed,
And sigh for hope and pleasure fled,—
Then, happy scenes, shall I no more,
With jocund steps thy haunts explore!
For I, through life, am doom'd to know
No change, but one eternal woe.

Valoria ceased—but Rinaldo still listened entranced—while, softened by the

ideas that crowded on her mind, tears fell from the eyes of our lovely heroine. —The last rays of the declining sun trembled on the fleecy waves, and as they sunk beyond the horizon, Rinaldo exclaimed in a melancholy tone: "Ah! Valoria, when yon orb again gleams on the ocean, I shall be far, far from hence, never, perhaps, to return.—What happy hours have I not passed in this retreat! Every scene recalls to my memory the felicity which is fled, and my heart sinks at the idea, that perhaps it is the last time I shall ever enjoy the bliss of being with you, of hearing that voice, whose accents are so dear to my soul.

"Do not indulge such mournful forebodings, Rinaldo," replied Valoria in a faultering voice: "We shall all meet, I trust, in happier times, and under more cheering auspices, when nothing will occur to interrupt our happiness."

"Sweet comforter," cried Rinaldo, "may thy prediction be verified; the hope of it will be the support of my existence!—I have a request," he added, "to make you, Valoria. Will you give me a lock of your hair, as a token of your remembrance?"

"Willingly," she replied, and taking out her scissars, she cut off a ringlet from her glossy tresses, and presented it to him. Rinaldo received it with ecstacy, and gave her in return an amber heart, suspended to a chain of pearls, which Valoria at first hesitated in accepting; but, overcome by his entreaties, she consented to receive it as a brother's gift; when warned by the lateness of the hour to return home, the little party quitted the hermitage, and silently retraced their steps to the villa.

As night advanced, Valoria's emotions

increased; and when she arose to retire to her chamber, they became almost too violent to be concealed. The idea that she was bidding a last farewell to those who were the sole beings upon earth she revered and loved, was too much for her susceptible heart; and in an almost inarticulate voice, she bade the Conte and his lady good night, kissed the cheek of Serena, and presented her cold and tremulous hand to Rinaldo, who pressed it eagerly to his lips—then giving one lingering look to the beloved group, she rushed from the room. On reaching the hall, her feelings were no longer to be restrained, and leaning against the bannisters, she wept bitterly, when a step on the marble pavement arouzed her—looking up she beheld Rinaldo, with a light in his hand, approaching the staircase. Dashing away her tears, she hastily began to ascend it; but ere she had reached the top, he overtook her, and they proceeded along the

" not forbid my making an effort to emu-
" late his example, by relieving you, my-
" self, from the embarrassments my pre-
" sence has occasioned. It was the only
" means in my power, to return the nu-
" merous obligations I owe you; this
" idea is a source of consolation to my
" soul, and however lowly and depressed
" may be my future state, it will always
" be so. Farewell, then, my dear and
" noble protectors, my only friends.—
" Accept my most fervent acknowledge-
" ments for all your goodness to me; and,
" as my last request, I implore you to
" forgive the involuntary grief I have
" caused you. May every blessing, every
" happiness that Heaven can bestow, be
" showered upon you! Morn and eve,
" on my bended knees, this shall be my
" ardent prayer; may God and his holy
" saints grant it, and I am content.
" Once more, farewell! Embrace the
" dear Serena for me; and assure the

"Signor Rinaldo of my fervent wishes
"for his welfare; implore him, as the
"only proof I can evince of my regard,
"to forget the hapless

"VALORIA."

The clock had struck one, as Valoria concluded her billet, and having placed it on the toilet, she laid down, to obtain, if possible, a short repose; but the reflections of her mind precluded sleep, and at the first dawn of day she arose from her couch, and flinging her mantle over her, quitted her apartment.

With light footsteps Valoria glided along the gallery. All was hushed in profound silence; and cautiously descending the staircase, she soon found herself in the grand hall. Fearfully she paused, and listened around her; no sound broke on her attentive ear, and the pale moon-beams that stole through the lofty case-

ments, afforded the only light to guide her steps. From the hall she proceeded to the library, and raising one of the windows, which descended to the floor, she let herself out into the garden. Pensively she trod the well-known path, illumined by the twilight dawn; and, on stopping at the gate that led to the shore, she turned round to survey the scene, so dear to her remembrance. Her eyes, swimming in tears, were fixed on the villa; even the shrubs and flowers, that waved in the morning breeze, seemed at this moment like friends she was going to leave for ever; and, folding her snowy hands together, she exclaimed with energy:—"Farewell, beloved spot; farewell for ever. Never shall I behold you again. Yet, oh! may every blessing attend thy dear inhabitants."

Sobs interrupted her utterance; and

opening the gate, she slowly descended the path to the shore. Her way lay by the hermitage in the cliff, and her tears flowed afresh when she caught a glance of the jessamine that shaded the entrance, as memory recalled to her mind the happy hours she had enjoyed beneath its roof.

A loud voice that hailed her, arouzed her from the indulgence of this fruitless sorrow; and she beheld Jacomo and his boy busily preparing for their voyage. In the course of a few minutes every thing was ready, and Valoria was conducted by the honest fisherman into his boat, which was instantly pushed off from the shore.

Pensively seated at the helm of the little vessel, our heroine continued with her eyes intently fixed upon the fast receding land. The god of day was rising from his misty bed, and darted his bright lines of radiance over the curling waves:

the air breathed fresh, and wantoned in the waving sail; but the beauty of the morning was unable to cheer the heavy heart of Valoria, whose spirits were sunk to the lowest ebb of despondency. An exile from her native land, a wandering fugitive, she felt as if deserted by the whole universe; without a protector, without a single friend to sympathize in her sorrows, or speak comfort to her aching heart! Her beautiful eyes, bathed in tears, once more sought the white turrets of the villa, as they arose behind a rising hill; and when she could no more behold them, she covered her face with her handkerchief, and leaning her head against the vessel, gave free indulgence to her feelings.

After a short time, Valoria recovered her composure, and Jacomo respectfully approaching her, offered her some milk and bread, which she accepted with gratitude, and thanked him with the most

winning sweetness. Her beauty, her sadness, and the gentle condescension of her manners, completely won upon the heart of the rough, but honest mariner; and, perceiving that she looked pale and languid, as if from want of rest, he advised her to endeavour to obtain a short repose. Valeria, who was exhausted both in body and mind, yielded to his persuasions, and wrapping herself in her mantle, laid down at the bottom of the boat, Jacomo having hung a large sail to each side, to keep off the sun, which was now become excessively hot. The moaning of the billows, joined to the continued and plaintive ditty of the mariners, conspired to lull the senses of Valoria to forgetfulness: and she enjoyed, for some hours, an uninterrupted slumber, from which she awoke considerably refreshed.

A dead calm having succeeded the fresh gale of the morning, they had made but little progress; and, from the lower-

ing appearance of the sky, the screams of the sea-fowl, and other signs, well known to sailors, Jacomo predicted an approaching storm, at the same time intreating the Signora not to be alarmed, assuring her that his vessel was able to weather a much heavier gale than the one they were now menaced with.

A short time proved the reality of his apprehensions; for such a storm came on as Valoria had never witnessed. The thunder rolled tremendously over their heads, and the lightning ran along the foaming waves, tipping their white tops with flame, while the wind, that raged with dreadful violence, drove the bark over the sea, at one time lifted upon the mountainous billows to the clouds, at others sunk into the abysses of the deep. Long did the exertions of the mariners enable her to weather the dreadful tempest; till bereft of their rudder and their sail torn in pieces, they were driven along

at the mercy of the gale, while every wave that burst over them threatened their total annihilation. Every hope now deserted the unfortunate party; and Jacomo and his son, flinging themselves at the bottom of the boat, gave themselves up to despair, while they bitterly lamented their eternal separation from the tender friends they were no more destined to behold. Less bound to the world by the ties of consanguinity and friendship, the approach of death had not the same horrors to Valoria. No tear, no exclamation broke from her. Pale as marble, she sat, her arms folded across her white bosom, and her beautiful expressive eyes raised in silent supplication to the Power in whose presence she shortly expected to appear.— Suddenly the vessel gave a tremendous roll—a loud scream burst from the lips of Valoria, and a total insensibility succeeded. On recovering her faculties, she found herself in the arms of a man, and unclos-

ing her eyes, feebly inquired where she was?

"We are saved! we are saved!" exclaimed Roland, in a tone of boisterous joy. "Our boat struck upon the shore; so what with a little wading, and so forth, we got released from her, and here we are again, alive, and safe, on terra firma."

Tears of gratitude fell from Valoria's eyes, as she silently breathed a fervent prayer to Heaven for her deliverance; then turning to Jacomo, she said—"How shall I thank you, my honest friend, for your exertions in saving a poor deserted being, who is unable to repay your kindness; since it must have cost you infinite trouble to bring me to the shore, helpless as I then was."

"God bless your sweet face, Signora," replied the fisherman; "had it cost me ten times more I would have done it;

both myself and Roland would have thought it a deadly sin to have saved ourselves, and left such a beautiful young creature to perish! But, avast! we must not stand palavering here; I think, somehow, our hut can't be far off; and so be we can reach it, my good dame will give you some dry clothing, and something to comfort you."

Cold, wet, and exhausted, Valoria readily accepted his offer, and immediately arose from the stone on which she had been sitting; but her benumbed limbs were unable to sustain her, and she would have sunk to the ground, if Jacomo and his son had not caught her, and leaning on an arm of each, they led, or rather supported her along the shore. The tempest had now abated. The thunder rolled at a distance, and the moon, appearing at intervals through the broken clouds, afforded a dubious light to the weary wanderers.

After walking half a mile, they quitted the sands, and ascended a winding path among the cliffs, which conducted them to a cottage, almost hid from observation by the trees that embowered it. Jacomo knocked loudly at the door, which was opened by a neat middle-aged woman, who instantly sprang into his arms, with an exclamation of joy. "Oh, my dear dear husband!" she cried "Are you then at last returned safe! Holy Virgin! what have I not suffered for you this dreadful night!"

"Yes, Nanine," replied her husband, "we have been preserved, though to be sure 'tis a miracle; for such a blustering I never was in before—but, thank St. Nicolas, 'tis over now; and I have brought you a guest to take care of, as sweet and pretty as the day."

Without giving his wife time to reply, Jacomo stepped back, and taking the

hand of Valoria, led her forward, to the astonishment of the good woman, when she beheld the delicate form before her, her hair and garments dripping with wet, and her cheek pale as the lily hand on which it rested. "Ah, sweet creature!" cried the tender-hearted Nanine, "what a condition she is in—one may well see she is not used to such hardships—but, never mind, a warm bed will soon restore her. It is coarse, to be sure, Signora," addressing Valoria, "yet you look so gentle, that I think you will not disdain it."

"Oh, thank you," replied the lovely exile, in a tone so irresistibly sweet, that it rouzed every tender feeling in the old dame's heart, and calling to a girl who was in the room, she ordered her to light a fire in the inner chamber. Her command was instantly obeyed; and Valoria was conducted to a neat apartment, where being speedily disencumbered of her

drenched cloaths, she was placed on a pallet, which though hard and not covered with the finest linen, appeared to her perfectly luxurious. Yet notwithstanding her excessive fatigue, and the potent cordial that Nanine administered to her, sleep refused its balmy influence. Excruciating pains shot through her head and temples, and cold chills, succeeded by burning heat, pervaded her frame, during the momentary slumbers that weighed down her eyelids; visions horrid and terrifying floated in her imagination; and she awoke in all the agonies of affright. —Thus passed the tedious night, and when Nanine, in the morning, entered the chamber of her interesting guest, she beheld, with emotions of surprize and alarm, the alteration which had taken place. Her eyes were closed, and her cheek, flushed with fever, rested on her arm, which seemed, from the contrast, even more delicate than usual. One of her hands laid on the counterpane. Na-

nine took it up, and at the same moment Valoria lifted up her heavy eyes, and exclaimed, at intervals, in low under tones:

"Yes—yes—I will fly from them all—But remember, Rinaldo must not know where I am; for he has a heart to pity me, and will come and save me from a watery grave!—Nay, you must not weep, for I must die; and it will be so sweet; for they have all deserted me, even my mother, and Eugenia.—And Montaldi too, oh, he can never then pursue me more!—"

"Poor, poor thing!" cried the good old woman; and her tears fell on the pillow.

For some minutes Valoria remained silent, when she added in fainter tones—"What! Rinaldo, you are weeping still, —I too wept; oh so bitterly, when I was in the boat; but now my head burns, and

my heart is so, so desolate."—Her voice died away in a low suppressed whisper, and Nanine hastened to acquaint her husband with the situation of the young and beautiful stranger.

Jacomo, on whom the charms and sweetness of Valoria had made a great impression, expressed unfeigned regret at the intelligence, and desired Nanine to take every possible care of the Signora, "who, he was sure," he said, "was some great lady." The good dame did not need these injunctions from her husband, to induce her to pay the most tender attentions to Valoria, for whom she felt equal pity and admiration.

In a foreign land, and thrown among entire strangers, on whose kindness she had no claim but that of humanity, Valoria received the most unremitted care and attention from these benevolent cottagers, who with a goodness of heart that

might have shamed their superiors, poured oil and wine into the wounds of the stranger.

For many days our heroine was so ill, that not only Nanine, but a doctor who had been sent for by her, despaired of her life; but youth and an unbroken constitution, assisted by excellent nursing, enabled her to surmount the violence of her disorder; and at the end of a fortnight she was sufficiently recovered to leave her chamber, though very weak and reduced. Her gratitude was unbounded to the fisherman's family, for their kindness, and she insisted on making them as handsome a recompence as the state of her finances would allow. This they at first refused, but her entreaties at length overcame their reluctance; and, charmed by the goodness and liberality of their beauteous inmate, they almost regarded her as something more than mortal.

The salubrity of the air, and the freshness of the sea breeze, conspired to renovate the health of Valoria, and so pleased was she with the calm seclusion of her present situation, and the manners of her host and his family, that she could not look forward to the prospect of quitting them, without the greatest reluctance. As her convalescence, however, became confirmed, it was absolutely necessary to take some steps for the future, and she accordingly wrote to Signor Corvino, informing him of her situation, and requesting his advice and assistance.

For several days she waited with extreme anxiety for an answer, when, to her inexpressible disappointment, she received her own letter inclosed in a cover, containing these words: "Left Naples, and no where to be found."

This was a death blow to the future expectations of Valoria, who had no other

friend to whom she could apply, and whose means of support were limited, and at the farthest could not possibly hold out long. In this dilemma, her best plan seemed to her to remain where she now was, since, in a situation so remote, there was little danger of discovery by those from whom she wished concealment: whereas, at Naples, unprotected as she was, many circumstances might occur to place her in the power of Montaldi, who would make, she doubted not, every effort to discover her retreat. Thus situated, she resolved to make a confidant of Nanine, on whose integrity and goodness of heart she placed the greatest reliance; and after informing her of as much of her situation, as it was necessary for her to know, she inquired if she would have any objection to let her remain with her for some time as a lodger.

"Objection! my sweet Signora," cried the good woman, while pleasure sparkled

in her eyes: "Lord bless you! no; we all love you so well, it would almost break our hearts to lose you; and you need never fear for a home while I and my old man have one to offer you."

"How kind, how very kind you are, my good mother!" returned Valoria, tears of gratitude trickling from her lovely eyes: "But though I can never sufficiently thank you for your goodness to me, I cannot consent to be a burthen on your benevolence. It is my intention to make you a suitable compensation for my residence with you; and as my fortune is very circumscribed, I shall endeavour, by my own exertions, to provide for my future subsistence."

"You provide for your subsistence, my dear child!" exclaimed Nanine in amazement. "Holy Virgin! what can such a sweet, delicate creature as you do! who seem by your looks, fit for nothing but a palace, or some such thing."

"Oh, many things!" replied Valoria smiling, "I am well acquinted with several kind of fine works, and can make a number of elegant little articles, that will pay me very well for my trouble, if you, or any of your family, will sell them for me at the neighbouring town."

Poor Nanine, who could not bear the idea of her beautiful young favourite "working for her bread," as she termed it, was earnest to dissuade her from her intended plan: but Valoria's resolution was not to be shaken, and fearful of offending her, Nanine dropped the subject.

The terms of her continuance were soon settled, between our heroine and her hostess, who willingly answered for her husband's concurrence, and who now hastened to arrange every thing for her future comfort and convenience. It was agreed that the little parlour and the room over it should be given up for Valoria's

use. The former commanded an extensive view of the ocean, and with a little addition to the furniture, which she insisted should be at her own expense, it soon made a very neat and respectable appearance. Her lute, which she had brought with her from the villa, and her drawing implements, were placed in this room; and a few landscapes, and other little ornaments, with which she adorned it, were a source of infinite delight and admiration to Nanine, who declared she had never seen any thing so fine before. All the family were highly pleased at Valoria's intention of remaining with them, so much had the sweetness of her temper, her condescension, and gratitude, endeared her to them; and it was with difficulty they restrained their desire of boasting to their village acquaintance, of the goodness of the great and beautiful Signora who lived with them, by her solemn injunction never to mention her name to any one out of their own house.

In this retreat, secluded from the world, and with no company but the rude, yet honest fisherman, and his family, the young and lovely Valoria passed her days —she, whose life had hitherto been spent in the midst of elegance and luxury, and in the most refined and exalted society. Yet here she was contented, and even happy; for she was exempted from those insults and sorrows which had embittered her existence, during her residence at Montaldi's, and the villa Salviati: and among people from whom she received every mark of respect, and who, from her beauty and accomplishments, regarded her as little less than a divinity.

To oblige and give pleasure to their fair guest was the study of the whole family. Jacomo and his wife supplied her table with every little delicacy that they could procure; Rosella was never so happy as when she could do any service for the Signora Valoria: and Roland, who had

discovered her admiration for such things, would walk miles to bring her a curious plant, or a beautiful shell or sea weed: and in a smile from her, found an ample reward for the toil, and sometimes danger, he had been at to obtain them. That a heart so susceptible as Valoria's, was sensible of these marks of attachment, may be supposed; and, limited as her means were, she did not entirely confine her expressions of gratitude to words. The profit she obtained from the sale of her drawings was considerable, and she was frequently able to make little presents to her rustic friends, and in their hours of leisure, she often devoted her time to the improvement of the younger branches, in writing and reading, to the great pride and pleasure both of them and their parents, who were highly flattered by this mark of condescension in their amiable lodger.

END OF VOL. I.

J. Gillet, Printer, Crown-court, Fleet-street, London.